

Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Inquiry into the Future of Agricultural and Rural Development Policies in Wales

Summary of Dialogue responses

Background

This document provides a summary of responses received to the online Dialogue conversation held as part of the **Inquiry into the Future of Agricultural and Rural Development Policies in Wales**.

This conversation was open for consultation and responses between 25 August 2016 and 30 November 2016.

Methodology

Following the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, the Committee called on the Welsh public to share their ideas about the future support for agriculture, land management and rural communities in Wales. For over forty years, Welsh agriculture, the landscapes and environment shaped by it, and the rural communities that depend on it, have been supported by policies set at a European level.

In exploring the principles that should underpin the new Welsh policies that will be needed to replace those currently set by the European Union, the **public were given an opportunity to share their ideas and priorities on what they think would be in the best interests of Wales and its people**.

Dialogue

Dialogue is a tool for running open discussions to generate ideas in response to specific challenges – in this instance, the Committee's call for evidence on the future of agricultural and rural development policies in Wales following the referendum decision to leave the European Union.

All discussions are archived and can be browsed online where you can read people's ideas, rates and comments.



Key statistics

29 Total number of ideas submitted

61 Total number of comments

121 Total number of ratings

Most voted and commented ideas:

- Embrace an expansion of the commercial forest cover in Wales
4.9 / 5 rating – 29 votes and 22 comments
- A new approach to sustainable land management in Wales
4.8 / 5 rating – 12 votes and 2 comments
- Fairer milk prices for farmers
4.1 / 5 rating – 11 votes and 7 comments



Highest rated and commented submissions

Embrace an expansion of the commercial forest cover in Wales

Forestry and wood processing is the classic sustainable sector; trees harvested to create the everyday wood products that society needs can be replanted in a never-ending cycle. Unlike other sectors, an increase in the economic activity of the forestry sector also **delivers additional environmental benefits** including biodiversity habitats, recreational facilities, water management and flood prevention as well as cleaning the air we breathe. Modern productive forests are designed to fit the landscape and include a wide range of species and areas managed for biodiversity

Productive forests soak up atmospheric carbon and the timber products from them store the carbon, helping Wales to mitigate against climate change and become more globally responsible.

Welsh timber is high quality, creating a wide range of products Welsh consumers want, the UK is the third largest importer of wood products in the world, we have a huge market for the products right next door. Wood processing companies in Wales say “we would double or treble capacity if the forest timber resource was there to do that”

We should take pride in the sector and support it with clear policies to ensure more home-grown timber is produced in the long-term to meet the increasing demand for timber products forecasted by The European Forest Sector Outlook Study II (2010)¹. WWF also this week issued the warning that “UK businesses face a timber supply crunch, amid expectations global demand for timber will treble by 2050 as economies and populations, and their need for wood and paper products, grow”².

Sadly, since 2001, the area of productive conifer woodland in Wales has **decreased by 18,000 ha³** and as a result by 2029 there will be a major fall-off in the long-term supply of timber which could be devastating for wood using businesses and jobs they sustain in Wales⁴.

The supply crisis has been exacerbated by the failure to meet WG planting targets (because of increased bureaucracy and delays in obtaining permissions to plant trees) and by the lack of restocking with commercial species by NRW on the Welsh government owned woodland estate. NRW has an area of around 5000ha of unstocked land, is continuing to fell 2000ha/year and restocking only 1300ha/year exasperating the problem.

Why the contribution is important

With global demand rising, pressure on timber from overseas is rising. Wales must reduce its demand on imports and ensure a sustainable long-term domestic supply of timber.

The WWF report⁵ makes a call, to “boost commercial forestry without damaging the other values of woodlands such as wildlife and recreation, the report recommends bringing unused or underused forest

¹ The European Forest Sector Outlook Study II 2010-2030. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

² <https://blogs.wwf.org.uk/blog/habitats/forests/will-the-axe-fall-on-uk-businesses-when-it-comes-to-timber/>

³ Woodlands for Wales Indicators 2014-15

⁴ NFI Statistical Analysis Report 50-year forecast of softwood timber availability

⁵ <https://blogs.wwf.org.uk/blog/habitats/forests/will-the-axe-fall-on-uk-businesses-when-it-comes-to-timber/>



back into management and planning forestry at a landscape scale”. It also urges planting trees which have a commercial and wildlife value.

The forestry and wood-using sector in Wales has an annual Gross Value Added (GVA) of £500 million and employs between 8,500 and 11,300 people in Wales⁶. This could be **significantly increased** by a programme of productive woodland creation in Wales.⁷

The forestry sector can deliver for the Welsh economy, its environment and society – and deserves to be afforded a much greater priority in policy-making.

Wales has an ideal climate for growing trees and there has never been a stronger case for dramatically increasing the forest area of Wales. Even the public purse will benefit from a change in land use towards forestry, as once established, forestry can deliver a strong economic output and will rely far less on public subsidy.

Contributor: [martinbishop](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/embrace-an-expansion-of-the-commercial-forest-cover-in-wales>

⁶ Woodlands for Wales Indicators 2014-15

⁷ NFI Statistical Analysis Report 50-year forecast of softwood timber availability



New approach to sustainable land management in Wales

The UK's decision to leave the EU presents us with a unique opportunity to develop new policies that will help Welsh Government meet its aspiration for Wales to be a world leading sustainable country, as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Environment Act. Key to this will be reform of existing land use policies, most importantly the Common Agricultural Policy, which despite supporting farmers for decades has failed to build resilient agriculture and prevent damage to the environment.

A new policy framework, aligned with Wales' commitment to sustainable development would secure benefits for people, the environment and nature as well as a sustainable economic future for farmers, other land managers and wider rural communities. This new framework would:

Support sustainable land management that maintains and enhances nature and the resilience of ecosystems to provide wide ranging social, economic and environmental benefits for Wales.

Secure sustainable amounts of safe, healthy food and timber and provide a diverse range of sustainable products that generate income and employment for rural businesses and contributes to a diverse rural economy.

Ensure that all public money invested in land management delivers true value by securing benefits for wider society.

Engage with wider society to help people make choices that recognise and reward sustainability as the norm in the way they live.

A realistic transition period towards these new arrangements will be vital and particularly important for the most economically vulnerable, such as those in our extensive livestock sector (typically associated with the uplands) who are often farming in marginal areas but which are of high environmental, landscape, recreational and nature value.

Why the contribution is important

This new framework will support progressive, innovative farmers and land managers, providing them with the certainty to engage in sustainable production. It will ensure public money is focused on supporting resilient rural businesses capable of meeting diverse environmental challenges such as the restoration of habitats, storage of atmospheric carbon and the natural management of flood risk and drinking water and in doing so ensure the best use of the land in Wales for everyone.

A similar ambition for sustainable management of our seas is also important.

Contributor: [RSPB Cymru / arfonwilliams](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/a-new-approach-to-sustainable-land-management-in-wales>



Fairer milk prices for farmers

Current milk prices means that farmers currently produce milk at a loss unless they can farm on a very large scale. Farmers would prefer a fair price for milk over any subsidies as allows them to be in control. Supermarkets don't pay a fair price. Setting minimum prices would allow farmers to rely on their produce to make an income rather than subsidies.

Why the contribution is important

Farmers are going out of business on a daily basis as importing milk produce from the EU and non-countries flood the market. We should support our farmers.

Contributor: [GEvs](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/fairer-milk-prices-for-farmers>



Summary of all submitted ideas

Improve engagement skills with farmers

Why the contribution is important

“This lack of our ability to engage with those that matter is holding back better ways of getting good stuff down without grandstanding from those trying to own the issues. Without trust and collaborative 'bottom-up' ownership by farmers and land managers, it's hard to get better practices to remain sustainable in the long term.”

Statistics: 0 votes, 0 comments

Contributor: [robbyorke](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/improve-engagement-skills-with-farmers>

Localised food production and distribution

Why the contribution is important

“Agricultural policy tends towards promoting large-scale farming as a means to achieving food efficient and sustainable food production...This may benefit the consumer in terms of food prices and it certainly benefits the supermarkets but these financial benefits rarely reach the producer, hence the need for subsidies to prop up their incomes and so it goes on...When done well, small-scale farming has been found to be more productive per unit area and more diverse in terms of both food and natural diversity.”

Statistics: 0 votes, 0 comments

Contributor: [SJWJ](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/localised-food-production-and-distribution>

Farming for public benefits

Why the contribution is important

“Simplify the bureaucracy around farming (i.e., reduce it, e.g., passports, tags, micro-chips etc.) by replacing with a farming licence. Benefits would include: less paperwork, benchmarked standards, licence reflecting the farm business's operations in return for public subsidy, i.e., reflecting the fact that farming financed by public subsidy is effectively a public service in everything but name.”

Statistics: 0 votes, 0 comments

Contributor: [Pzazz](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/farming-for-public-benefits>



Positive support for our under 10m long fishing boat industry

Why the contribution is important

“The Welsh Assembly should positively support our smaller under 10m fishing boat fleet that have been unfairly disenfranchised since our territorial waters were made common under the 1972 Communities Act. As soon as Wales exits the European Union the Welsh Assembly should legislate to ban foreign fishing from around the Welsh coastline, except when there is a proven benefit for Wales. In addition control over Welsh fisheries and marine protection must be devolved to the Welsh Assembly.”

Statistics: 0 votes, 0 comments

Contributor: [Grewar](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/positive-support-for-our-under-10m-long-fishing-boat-industry>

Gweithio'r Tir

Why the contribution is important

“The Environment (Wales) Act and the Well-Being of Future Generations Act has already set the tone and created the context for Wales' rural development policies. Land management and place planning now need to measure up.”

Statistics: 1 vote – 5.0/5, 0 comments

Contributor: [PaulSinnadurai](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/gweithior-tir>

Supporting rural communities

Why the contribution is important

“Although agriculture is the principal driver of agricultural policies and from the ideas posted already stimulated a range of discussions, however, the current European funded Rural Development Programme also includes community engagement and social cohesion. Farming activities underpin rural communities and support extensive supply chains, however, future strategy should address growing rural poverty, erosion of rural services (which impacts on the agricultural sector too), unemployment and ageing populations.”

Statistics: 4 votes – 4.2/5, 2 comments

Contributor: [BeverleyPold](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/supporting-rural-communities>



Scrapping all subsidies and follow New Zealand

Why the contribution is important

“We can't have free trade deals with countries that don't hand over vast sums of money to farmers.”

Statistics: 0 votes, 1 comment

Contributor: [smallholder](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/follow-new-zealand>

Focus on land, human and animal health

Why the contribution is important

“Outcomes from policies should promote sustainable, long-term biodiversity of the environment; should focus on human health and animal welfare, not profits; should focus on activities that do not contribute to adverse climate change; and should not provide funding for practices that damage the environment or human health or contribute to climate change (meat and dairy industries).”

Statistics: 3 votes – 3.3/5, 2 comments

Contributor: [lisad](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/focus-on-land-human-and-animal-health>

Regional Identification of Goods

Why the contribution is important

“To ensure that people are aware that a food item has been made in Wales, using Welsh materials on Welsh land by Welsh people, the [Welsh] Government [should] to seek to introduce a Made in Wales image that can be placed on items provided every part of the manufacture of that item was within the confines of Wales (in a similar spirit to the Welsh Lamb campaigns currently ongoing).”

Statistics: 2 votes – 4.0/5, 1 comment

Contributor: [HarryHayfield](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/regional-identification-of-goods>

More Financial Support for Welsh Hill Farmers

Why the contribution is important

“For government to create an uncomplicated subsidy system to protect Welsh hill farmers and hill farming in general and to implement such subsidy for hill farmers as a matter of urgency.”

Statistics: 10 votes – 3.7/5, 4 comments

Contributor: [ideaslab](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/more-financial-support-for-welsh-hill-farmers>



Subsidies and planning

Why the contribution is important

"Farming and agriculture are not the same. Farming could be anything. The word farm means to "Bring in"...Agriculture is food. Subsidies should only be given to hill farmers in agriculture who have to work hard for their money."

Statistics: 1 vote – 4.0/5, 1 comment

Contributor: [flatroofer](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/subsidies-and-planning>

Beauty

Why the contribution is important

"We have the natural resources in Wales to move our energy supply to renewables and our farms to organic. It's simple we look after our country and our country looks after us and our children and so on to the future generations."

Statistics: 1 vote – 4.0/5, 0 comments

Contributor: [Eirlys](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/beauty>

Puppy Farms

Why the contribution is important

"We as a nation of dog lovers should be doing everything we can to prevent cruelty to dogs. The Welsh Assembly must legislate for the proper regulation of puppy breeding in Wales."

Statistics: 5 votea – 4.2/5, 2 comments

Contributor: [Grewar](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/puppy-farms>

Rewilding landscapes to save communities

Why the contribution is important

"Rewilding could solve the economic crisis of rural communities by offering alternative livelihoods to those currently available (and heavily reliant upon subsidies). Rewilding also offers opportunities to improve the status of biodiversity throughout Wales. North Wales is currently seen as the adventure capital of the UK - rewilding sits perfectly within that remit, but could expand this to be the 'natural adventure capital of the UK!'"

Statistics: 3 votes – 4.0/5, 3 comments

Contributor: [hayerns](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/rewilding-landscapes-to-save-communities>



European Protected Species - Bats, Dormice, etc.

Why the contribution is important

“How will European protected species be protected post-Brexit?”

Statistics: 4 votes – 3.0/5, 1 comment

Contributor: [Dave](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/european-protected-species-bats-dormice-etc>

Livestock farm assurance inspections

Why the contribution is important

“It would make the inspectors focus their attention on raising standards of those farms who are scoring lower in the inspections, use their resources more efficiently, and have a positive effect on the overall levels of animal welfare on livestock farms.”

Statistics: 4 votes – 3.5/5, 0 comments

Contributor: [TyG](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/livestock-farm-assurance-inspections>

Rural Land management and Agri-environmental schemes

Why the contribution is important

“Too many land owners do not consider or are not aware of the impacts of modern practices and agri-environmental schemes have not worked very well in the past - witness the continued decline in biodiversity, despite numerous policy changes and commitments. A big difference could be made with a few very simple changes to the rules governing land management practices. The significance of tourism in the rural economy and the positive impact of a rich and biodiverse landscape also make this idea important.”

Statistics: 4 vote – 4.5/5, 0 comments

Contributor: [denvaughan](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/rural-land-management-and-agri-environmental-schemes>



Transport of live animals for slaughter outside the UK

Why the contribution is important

“We here in Wales should prohibit the transport of live animals for slaughter outside the UK. Because there is no maximum 8 hour journey time for live animals under EU law and I believe the EU is soft on animal welfare abuse.”

Statistics: 4 votes – 4.5/5, 2 comments

Contributor: [Grewar](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/transport-of-live-animals-for-slaughter-outside-the-uk>

Diversity

Why the contribution is important

“Diversity of land use, with well-managed native woodland alongside thriving farms are proven to be more attractive for tourism (e.g. Scottish Highlands, Lake District), through re-creation of supportive habitats for native wildlife.

Agriculture should be encouraged to restore the ancient habitats in order to stimulate such diversity.”

Statistics: 5 votes – 4.8/5, 3 comments

Contributor: [Croesy05](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/diversity>

Rural Income Support

Why the contribution is important

“Small Farmers' tend to be family owned businesses operating on a scale which does not encourage them to source supplies outside their local communities such as can be seen happening with the expansion and industrialisation of some larger farms over the last 20 years or so. These small farms are the backbone of rural communities and also essential in maintaining the Welsh language, culture and traditions that are sadly being eroded due to low wage levels and lack of farm profits to distribute. Young farmers clubs are also extremely important in maintaining traditional Welsh culture and should be supported directly.”

Statistics: 7 votes – 3.4/5, 5 comments

Contributor: [lanH](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/rural-income-support>



Sustainable log supply - support scheme

Why the contribution is important

“I used to run a successful programme in the north east of England (**NULogs**) which aimed to support small-scale log supply in rural areas of Northumberland. The benefits to having a thriving and good quality local log supply can make a significant difference to the rural sector. Local supply of firewood is an unsung hero of the rural economy, and it contributes to supporting good quality woodland management - which is itself important for flood management, biodiversity support and access for countryside users. The returns on investment have the potential to be high, as long as the support scheme is carefully thought out and targeted.”

Statistics: 5 vote – 4.8/5, 2 comments

Contributor: [davidclubb](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/sustainable-log-supply-support-scheme>

National Trust Wales Response- A New Policy for Our Countryside

Why the contribution is important

“A new policy framework, aligned with Wales’ commitment to sustainable development would secure benefits for people, the environment and nature as well as a sustainable economic future for farmers, other land managers and wider rural communities. This new framework would: support sustainable land management that maintains and enhances nature and the resilience of ecosystems; secure sustainable amounts of safe, healthy food and timber and provide a diverse range of sustainable products that generate income and employment for rural businesses; ensure that all public money invested in land management delivers true value by securing benefits for wider society and engage with wider society to help people make choices that recognise and reward sustainability as the norm in the way they live.”

Statistics: 2 votes – 5.0/5, 0 comments

Contributor: [EmilyKeenan](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/national-trust-wales-response-a-new-policy-for-our-countryside>

Butterfly Conservation Wales Response

Why the contribution is important

“Properly focused Agri-environment Schemes (AES) have been shown to be highly successful at conserving some of Britain’s most threatened butterflies. It will ensure public money is focused on supporting progressive, innovative farmers and land managers to meet diverse environmental challenges such as the restoration of species and habitats, storage of atmospheric carbon and the natural management of flood risk and drinking water and in doing so ensure the best use of the land in Wales for everyone.”

Statistics: 2 votes – 5.0/5, 0 comments

Contributor: [rhobson](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/butterfly-conservation-wales-response>



The Rural Economy in Mid Wales

Why the contribution is important

“As agricultural activities play such a large part in the economy of Mid Wales in comparison to other economic regions of Wales, any potential changes to future support for agriculture, land management and rural communities will proportionally have a greater effect on the region. The Growing Mid Wales partnership would seek to work closely with Government to ensure any future support for agriculture, land management and rural communities in the Mid Wales region meets the needs of the region’s people and economy, and would welcome any opportunity to contribute to the work of the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee.”

Statistics: 0 votes, 0 comments

Contributor: [GrowingMidWales](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/the-rural-economy-in-mid-wales>

Many small scale experiments for a more resilient future

Why the contribution is important

“What we need is relaxing of planing permissions and other regulations for experimental / alternative communities, eco-villages, or self-built houses; we need land and we need grants. It is vitally important that public money won't go to some smoke screen / green wash projects for clever bureaucrats but to real people building real future. There also should not be any exploitation of vulnerable and gullible “volunteers”, like in some modern social enterprises. People who will be living and working in those future communities are also the best candidates for building them.”

Statistics: 5 votes – 5.0/5, 0 comments

Contributor: [AlexandraCook](#)

Archived: <https://senedd.dialogue-app.com/eich-syniadau-your-ideas/many-small-scale-experiments-for-a-more-resilient-future>

