

DECISION NOTICE OF AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

DATE OF DECISION 13 November 2018

DATE DECISION PUBLISHED 13 November 2018

DATE DECISION WILL COME INTO FORCE and implemented,
unless the decision is called in, in accordance with section 7.25 of
the Gwynedd Council Constitution 20 November 2018

Cabinet Member: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, Leader of the Council

SUBJECT: GWYNEDD COUNCIL RESPONSE TO WELSH GOVERNMENT
CONSULTATION: `Support for Welsh farming after Brexit' (Brexit and our land: Securing
the future of Welsh farming)

DECISION:

To present the attached response to the Welsh Government consultation
`Support for Welsh farming after Brexit' (Brexit and our land: Securing the future
of Welsh farming)

REASON WHY THE DECISION IS NEEDED

Please see attached officer report

DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND ANY RELEVANT DISPENSATIONS APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE


None

ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

Consultation with
Gwynedd Council Statutory Officers

The results of the consultations are reported upon in the attached report

**DECISION NOTICE OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBER OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET
OFFICER REPORT**

Name and title of Cabinet Member/s:	Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn, Council Leader
Name and title of Report Author :	Dylan Griffiths, Economic Development Programmes Manager, Economy & Community Department
Date of Decision :	13 / 11 / 18
Signature of Cabinet Member/s :	

Subject :

**GWYNEDD COUNCIL RESPONSE TO WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION:
'Support for Welsh farming after Brexit' (Brexit and our land: Securing the
future of Welsh farming)**

Recommendation for the Decision :

To present the attached response to the Welsh Government consultation
'Support for Welsh farming after Brexit' (Brexit and our land: Securing the
future of Welsh farming)

Reason why Decision is needed :

On 10 July 2018 the Welsh Government launched a consultation on support
for Welsh farmers after Brexit (see: https://beta.gov.wales/support-welsh-farming-after-brexit?_ga=2.214345175.170639735.1540140606-2073028827.1537886046).

The consultation closed on 30 October 2018.

Reason and justification behind the Decision :

As you know Gwynedd is a large rural county, and farming - and its
associated industries - continue to be a cornerstone of most of the county
in economic, social and cultural terms.

There are over 1,200 businesses in the agricultural sector in Gwynedd and
almost 5,000 of our residents still earn a living from the sector directly and
many, many more are dependent upon the sector indirectly. The support

provided by the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy has been critical to maintaining farming, and supporting rural development, for over forty years, and in 2017 alone £39M came to Gwynedd by means of the Policy.

Any change to the provision of support to farmers may affect Gwynedd economically, environmentally, socially and culturally.

In light of the importance of agriculture to Gwynedd it's critical that the Council responds to the Welsh Government's consultation.

Declarations of personal interest by any Cabinet Member consulted with and any relevant dispensations approved by the Standards Committee

None

Any consultations undertaken prior to making the decision :

Head of Finance -

*"The financial implications of ' Brexit ' remain unclear. The decision notice reflects the Council's view on the Welsh Government's consultation document **"Brexit and our land: Securing the future of Welsh farming"** regarding support for farmers after Brexit, and in terms of financial propriety, I have nothing to add on that subject."*

Monitoring Officer -

"No observations with regards to propriety."

Arweinydd y Cyngor
Leader of the Council

Cynghorydd / Councillor Dyfrig L Siencyn



E: cynghorydd.dyfrigsiencyn@gwynedd.llyw.cymru
T: 01286 679686

DS/dg

Lesley Griffiths AM
Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay CF99 1NA

26 October 2018

Via email: gohebiaeth.lesley.griffiths@llyw.cymru

Annwyl Lesley Griffiths AC

GWYNEDD COUNCIL RESPONSE

'Support for Welsh farming after Brexit' (Brexit and our land: Securing the future of Welsh farming) consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to present Gwynedd Council's response to the above consultation

As you know Gwynedd is a large rural county, and farming - and its associated industries - continue to be a cornerstone of most of the county in economic, social and cultural terms.

There are over 1,200 businesses in the agricultural sector in Gwynedd and almost 5,000 of our residents still earn a living from the sector directly and many, many more are dependent upon the sector indirectly. The support provided by the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy has been critical to maintaining farming, and supporting rural development, for over forty years, and in 2017 alone £39M came to Gwynedd by means of the Policy.

Whilst welcoming the Welsh Government's commitment to support farm businesses to be more competitive, as described in the consultation document; and being generally supportive of a policy direction which provides support in recognition of the incalculable additional value farming provides to rural areas and Wales as a whole; Gwynedd Council is opposed to the proposals as they are currently constituted. We believe that if the

www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Adran Economi a
Chymuned
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
Caernarfon LL55 1SH
T: 01286 679947

Welsh Government proceeds without due thought it risks undermining the fundamental viability of rural communities, irreversibly changing the landscape, society and linguistic profile of Wales to the nation's detriment.

In light of the above, Gwynedd Council calls upon the Welsh Government to commit to the following:

- a) To provide a stable environment for farm businesses as they adjust to the inevitable changes in market conditions post Brexit by maintaining the current structure of direct funding to farms for as long as appropriate, with the exception of measures to simplify the administration of the current system.
- b) To only proceed with any changes after this period on the basis of detailed research and modelling at a sufficiently spatial small level to ensure that they result in positive outcomes for farmers and the rural economy, communities and the Welsh language, with due consideration of differing land uses.
- c) To include support to maintain food production as a core component of any future system of payments, and ensure that any funding provided in recognition of the wider value farming provides is additional and broadly defined to reflect the economic, social and cultural value of farming, as well its role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- d) To guarantee that support is only provided to those who actively work on and manage the land with a focus on small and medium family farms.
- e) To ensure that ring-fenced money for investment in rural development is provided, especially to support projects responding to the economic challenges facing rural Wales. This funding should be directed to those areas where the economic impact of peripherality is greatest.

In addition, the Council offers the following comments on the proposals outlined in the 'Brexit and our land: Securing the future of Welsh farming' consultation document, reflecting the above:

1. Welsh Government must be clear on the purpose of this policy and what it seeks to achieve. The title of the consultation document makes reference to the future of farming but the content of the document is clearly driven by land management and the management of natural resources.

Whilst linked and complementary, these two purposes are not identical.

2. Gwynedd Council believes that the consultation document comprehensively undervalues the importance of farming and food

production to Wales as a whole, and rural areas in particular, in economic, social and cultural terms.

In terms of the rural economy, farming and food production continue to be mainstay of the economy in large parts of Wales directly through employment and supply chain expenditure and indirectly as a result expenditure in local shops and services.

Socially, in many rural communities farming families are critical to maintaining the viability of local schools and services, reducing the outflow of young families and maintaining social cohesion.

Culturally, the heartlands of the Welsh language are in the most rural communities where farming is predominant – the very areas which are most vulnerable to market uncertainty and changes in the structure of direct support for agriculture.

The Council also believes that the proposals do not meet the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Welsh Government should provide further evidence of how it believes its proposals meet their statutory duties under the Act.

3. Whatever the eventual outcome of Brexit, Welsh farming, food production and rural communities will face a period of instability, uncertainty and, potentially, change at a scale and pace not seen since the post war period.

The Welsh Government's first duty in these circumstances is to provide as much stability as possible to farm businesses as they adapt. In the Council's opinion, a failure to do so would be negligent in the extreme and risk the collapse of the Welsh agricultural sector and thus our rural communities as they exist today.

With the exception of measures to simplify and streamline their administration, any changes to the direct support provided to farm businesses should be kept to a minimum for as long as appropriate.

4. It is incomprehensible that the Welsh Government has proposed such radical changes to the fundamental basis of support to farm businesses without any evidence of the potential direct and indirect impacts.

Whilst accepting that detailed modelling of any new system will only be possible once the schemes have been developed; initial scoping of the potential impact upon farmers and the rural economy, communities and the Welsh language, with a focus on the most rural parts of Wales, should inform policy development from the outset.

5. Gwynedd Council does not accept that direct support for farming should be de-coupled from food production. The Council believes that

production is essential to maintaining the landscape and makes a significant contribution to food security and reduces the requirement to import food contributing to Wales' efforts to combat climate change.

Gwynedd supports the provision of additional support to farming in recognition of the wider value farming can and does provide to the environment and the social, cultural and broader economic well-being of rural areas. However, this support should be additional and supplementary to the support provided to production. The balance of emphasis between both elements may be adjusted gradually over time, but only with significant upfront investment in support to make small and medium sized farm businesses more commercially viable.

6. Reflecting the points noted above, Gwynedd Council opposes the proposals for a Public Goods scheme as they are currently outlined in the consultation document.

'Public Goods' as currently described do not reflect the economic, social and cultural importance of farming as well as its role in enhancing the natural environment, landscapes and heritage and recreation.

Support should only be provided to those who actively manage the land with a focus on small and medium family farms. Public funds should directly benefit those working the land through a clear active farmer definition and moved away from large landowners through a lowering of the cap on the support available. Unless sufficient safeguards are introduced, the Welsh Government's current proposals risk fundamentally undermining our rural communities by creating an artificial market for land where large absent landowners can generate a return on their investment with little activity. Similarly, the proposed scheme could incentivise the abandonment of upland agricultural land in particular, impacting ecosystems and the landscape and leading to a fundamental change in their nature.

The Welsh Government should also undertake that the administration of any new scheme is no more costly than the current system.

7. Gwynedd Council supports the proposals for the Economic Resilience Scheme as described in the consultation document and welcomes the proposal to extend and build upon the current provision.

The Council broadly agrees with the five areas of support outlined and agrees that activity should be undertaken at all levels of the supply chain from individual farms to the industry as a whole.

As noted previously, Gwynedd believes that farm level support should be concentrated on the small and medium farms which are the backbone of agriculture in Wales; we also believe that activity to develop the commercial viability of the industry should be introduced

in advance of any changes to basic farm payments and at a significantly greater scale than at present, to help the industry prepare for change post Brexit.

The Council note a potential concern regarding the availability of sufficiently qualified individuals with thorough understanding of farm businesses, land valuation and management etc. to provide the volume and quality of service that will be required.

8. Gwynedd Council is extremely concerned at the almost complete lack of reference to broader rural development in the consultation document, particularly in relation to maintaining activity to develop new and innovative approaches to the challenges faced by rural areas (LEADER) and the development of the rural economy beyond agriculture and food production.

The Council calls for specific ring fenced funds to be provided to support rural community and economic development, with the resources targeted to those areas most disadvantaged by their peripherality.

9. Gwynedd Council believes that the Welsh language is an integral part of what makes Wales the special and unique place it is. As referred to in several sections above, the Council believes the Welsh Government's proposals will threaten the future of the Welsh language by undermining the viability of those communities that form the heartlands of the language.

Welsh Government must demonstrate that a full and robust analysis of potential the impact of their proposals has been carried out and aim to ensure that any proposals will positively enhance and support the Welsh language and the communities which are critical to its future.

10. Whilst acknowledging the need for some degree of voluntary co-ordination in the support provided to agriculture across the nations of the UK, devolution and the constitutional settlement must be respected. No attempt by the UK Government to curtail the Welsh Government's ability to develop and deliver support tailored to the particular needs of Welsh Farming and rural communities should be tolerated.
11. Finally, the Welsh Government should ensure that the level of funding received by the UK Treasury to support agriculture and rural development should be a maintained beyond the current commitments to 2020/22, that the funding received is demonstrably additional to the settlement and that the UK Government makes good on its commitment that Wales should be no worse off as a result of Brexit.

