



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd **The Environment and Sustainability Committee**

Dydd Mercher, 24 Gorffennaf 2013
Wednesday, 24 July 2013

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The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol **Committee members in attendance**

Keith Davies	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Julie James) Labour (substitute for Julie James)
Yr Arglwydd/Lord Elis-Thomas	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Llyr Huws Gruffydd	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Antoinette Sandbach	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Alun Davies	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd) Assembly Member, Labour (Minister for Natural Resources and Food)
Dr Christianne Glossop	Prif Swyddog Milfeddygol, Llywodraeth Cymru Chief Veterinary Officer, Welsh Government
Gary Haggaty	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr, Materion Gwledig, Llywodraeth Cymru Deputy Director, Rural Affairs, Welsh Government

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Alun Davidson	Clerc Clerk
Elfyn Henderson	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Catherine Hunt	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Nia Seaton	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

Cynhaliwyd y cyfarfod yn y Sioe Fawr, Llanelwedd.
The meeting was held in the Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells.

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 10.28 a.m.
The meeting began at 10.28 a.m.

Craffu ar Waith y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd—Craffu Cyffredinol
Scrutiny of the Minister for Natural Resources and Food—General Scrutiny

[1] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Bore da i'r Gweinidog, y prif swyddog milfeddygol, y dirprwy gyfarwyddwr materion gwledig a'r ymgynghorydd. Mae'n dda gennyf unwaith eto eich croesawu i ddigwyddiad o graffu ar y Gweinidog yn y Sioe Fawr.

Lord Elis-Thomas: Good morning to the Minister, the chief veterinary officer, the deputy director of rural affairs, and to the adviser. I am pleased once again to welcome you to a scrutiny session in the Royal Welsh Show.

[2] Weinidog, a oes rhywbeth byr a chryno yr hoffet ti ei ddweud ar y dechrau, neu a wyt yn hapus inni fynd yn syth i'r holi?

Minister, do you have any brief remarks that you would like to make at the outset, or are you content that we should move immediately to questions?

[3] **The Minister for Natural Resources and Food (Alun Davies):** Since our time is

limited this morning, I feel that it would probably be better to go straight to questions. I will say that I think that everybody has been having a good week here at Llanellwedd, enjoying the Tredegar climate. *[Laughter.]* People have been involved in conversations about the reform of the common agricultural policy, the 'State of Nature', and the rest of it, and I think that we have all had a very enjoyable week.

[4] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr, Weinidog. A gaf ofyn y cwestiwn cyntaf, sef beth yw'r gwahaniaeth rhwng sgwrs ac ymgynghoriad?

Lord Elis-Thomas: Thank you very much, Minister. May I ask the first question, that is, what is the difference between a conversation and a consultation?

[5] **Alun Davies:** 'Ymgynghoriad' yw'r broses, statudol ambell waith, ond gwleidyddol, y mae'n rhaid inni fynd drwyddi cyn inni wneud penderfyniad, a 'sgwrs' yw'r deialog sy'n rhan o hynny. Mae'n well gennyf ddefnyddio'r gair 'sgwrs', achos mae'n well gennyf gael deialog. Mae'n bosibl cael ymgynghoriad, wrth gwrs, drwy i'r Llywodraeth gyhoeddi dogfen i'r we ac aros nes bydd atebion yn dod dri mis wedi hynny, ac wedyn gwneud datganiad llafar ar lawr Siambr y Cynulliad. Mae'n well gennyf i gael deialog â phobl a chymunedau ar draws y wlad, a dyna pam rwy'n defnyddio'r gair 'sgwrs' yn fwy aml na'r gair 'ymgynghoriad', oherwydd dyna'r math o drafodaeth wleidyddol rwy'n credu y dylem ei chael yng Nghymru.

Alun Davies: A 'consultation' is the process, statutory on occasion, but certainly political, that we have to go through before we make decisions, and a 'conversation' is the dialogue that is part of that. I prefer to use the word 'conversation', because I prefer to have a dialogue. It is possible to have a consultation, of course, by publishing a Government document online, awaiting responses that will arrive three months hence, and then making an oral statement on the floor of the Assembly. I prefer to have a dialogue with people and communities across the country, and that is why I use the word 'conversation' more often than the word 'consultation', because that is the kind of political discussion that I believe we should have in Wales.

10.30 a.m.

[6] Rwy'n credu mai dyna pam roedd pob un ohonom yn y fan hon wedi cefnogi datganoli: er mwyn cynnal cymanfa genedlaethol ambell waith i drafod y materion sy'n ein wynebu ni fel cenedl.

I think that that is the reason why all of us here supported devolution: in order to hold a national conversation occasionally to discuss the issues facing us as a nation.

[7] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Russell, would you like to start?

[8] **Russell George:** No, I am fine.

[9] **Alun Davies:** I answered all of Russell's questions in my opening remarks.

[10] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Julie is next.

[11] **Julie Morgan:** I wanted to start on the issue of dangerous dogs. Last week, the committee met the stakeholders who had been involved in discussing the original Welsh Bill, and they all expressed disappointment that we were not going ahead with the Welsh Bill. Will you tell the committee how negotiations are going with the Westminster Government and whether you think you will be able to achieve, via negotiations in Westminster, what we wanted in Wales?

[12] **Alun Davies:** In answer to your final question, the direct answer is, 'Yes, I think so'. I am still very confident and optimistic about that. I have not had any further meetings at

ministerial level with the Home Office on these matters since our last conversation, which I think was at the end of May. Officials have been talking and we have been talking actively about how we take these matters forward. No significant difficulties have been flagged up to me. I do not anticipate that we will reach agreement over the summer, before Parliament returns from its summer recess. However, I will say that the conversations that we are having with the Home Office have become richer, if you like, in terms of where we are. Since we started those conversations in May, we have had, between the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Home Office and us—I am sorry, Chair, but why are we drinking English water?

[13] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Excuse me, Minister, but it is not English water; it is marcher water.

[14] **Alun Davies:** Okay; I am sorry. It caught my eye as I was speaking.

[15] We are also now talking about fly-grazing and other matters that might be covered by that legislation. I made a statement on fly-grazing before our recess, and I will be making a further statement when we return from recess. The work that we are doing, both on the control of dogs and in terms of fly-grazing, needs to dovetail with DEFRA and Home Office legislation for us to have a comprehensive suite of legislative options available to us.

[16] Diolch am y dŵr Cymreig, Thank you for the Welsh water, Chair. That Gadeirydd. Dyna welliant. [*Chwerthin.*] is better. [*Laughter.*]

[17] **Julie Morgan:** Do you think that we will get dog control notices?

[18] **Alun Davies:** We will have the control notices that will be designed by the Home Office, with input to the guidance from DEFRA and us, which will fulfil the same imperatives. You asked a particular question citing a particular name, and I understand that.

[19] **Julie Morgan:** That was raised by the stakeholders as being the key issue in relation to what is needed.

[20] **Alun Davies:** Julie, I do not have any issue with any of the criticisms made. I followed the session that you had last week. I do not take issue with any of the criticisms that were made. I understand and appreciate the disappointment that was expressed. The concerns that were raised by your stakeholders—or, rather, our stakeholders—were very fair and reasonable concerns. I do not have an issue with any of the points that were raised with you. However, I will say that I hope that we are able to address these matters. My approach is that we require legislation to use the legislative tools and the legislative vehicle that is most appropriate and available to us. So, if we are able to use Westminster to deliver legislation for Wales, I do not have a practical or philosophical problem with that. We are doing exactly the same, of course, with circuses at the moment. Some Members here have said that they want Welsh legislation on this matter. However, DEFRA has given us an assurance that it is going through the legislative process, and I have simply said that we should ensure that the territorial legislation on that issue extends to Wales as well, which will be a more efficient way of legislating.

[21] **Julie Morgan:** It is not an ideological issue; it is whether it will be delivered. Also, if it does not deliver, would you then go ahead with Welsh legislation?

[22] **Alun Davies:** Yes, absolutely. I have suspended the legislation, but I have not cancelled it. There is an expectation that we will not go forward with that. I understand that that was raised with you last week. I appreciate that. I was very clear in the wording I used in the written statement I made that we are suspending, but not cancelling, this legislation. We

still have all of the legislative counsels' work available to us, and we can move forward with that reasonably quickly. However, where there is an option that I believe will provide a more comprehensive solution, I think that we should use that. So, it is a matter of a sort of ruthless pragmatism, rather than anything else, that I think that I am trying to imply here. However, I appreciate the points that you raise.

[23] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Mae **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Antoinette Sandbach is Antoinette Sandbach nesaf, ac yna Llyr a next, and then Llyr and William. William.

[24] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Minister, I want to ask you about your TB programme. It has been some time since we have scrutinised you on TB. What independent scientific evidence are you gathering during the course of this vaccination so that the results of vaccination can be peer-reviewed and the causes of the increase of 15% in herd breakdown on TB can be identified?

[25] **Alun Davies:** Would you like to take that question, Christianne?

[26] **Dr Glossop:** Yes, I would be very happy to do so. With regard to the intensive action area badger vaccination programme, this is not a controlled experiment. It is not a trial but an application of a technology for which we have evidence that it should benefit the badger population in the area. We know that vaccinating clean badgers can reduce the risk of them becoming infected. What we do not know is the effect that that can have on TB breakdowns in cattle. No-one has really looked at that in earnest before, and that is what we are looking at, but not as a balanced controlled experiment. We are now fighting the disease in anger and using vaccination alongside other cattle measures.

[27] In terms of the cause of individual breakdowns, I think that this is a very important piece of work that we are now embarking on, not just in the intensive action area, but in six cluster areas across Wales. We have appointed a TB epidemiologist for Wales and we have increased the amount of veterinary officer time that goes into understanding the breakdowns, working in close conjunction with private veterinary surgeons. So, I think that identifying the cause of individual breakdowns and the link that they might have to wildlife, cattle movements or to biosecurity will become much clearer in this new phase of our eradication programme.

[28] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, to summarise what you have said, in short, you do not regard it as a trial, even though you are taking action in a limited area, and there is not scientific evidence coming out of the vaccination programme that could be peer-reviewed and that could lead to greater information on whether or not the vaccine is actually effective.

[29] **Alun Davies:** Well, clearly, we are conducting a TB eradication programme that is multifaceted. This is not an experiment taking place in a laboratory under controlled conditions. This is actually fighting the disease in the field. I think that what you will see over the next few years is an increasing sophistication of the programme to combat bovine TB. We hear all these calls, 'Go ahead with a badger cull in Pembrokeshire' and so on, but that will do nothing to help people in sir Fôn. We need to be able to address the disease in different ways in different places, where the disease develops in a different way. So, you might well see, in the future, a different method of controlling the disease in different places. I think that this will happen in different territories, not simply in Wales. Certainly, the scientific work that we are currently undertaking and the specialists that we have appointed in the last six months to undertake some of this work are finding that the disease does develop in different ways in different places, and that using one method to address the disease everywhere probably—I say 'probably'—is not the correct way forward. I will make this absolutely clear: we are not approaching this with our heads in the sand and with our eyes closed. We are looking at what

other administrations are doing elsewhere. We are not just looking eastwards across that border, but we are also looking in other right directions at how the disease is controlled, and how other eradication programmes are being run, and we are learning from each other. There are many people learning from us, and we, in the same way, are learning from others. So, I think that what you are seeing at the moment is the development of probably more international collaboration than we have seen at any time in the past. I think that that will bear fruit as we bear down on the disease.

[30] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, given the cost of £664 per badger vaccinated and the increase in breakdowns, what is your explanation for the 15% increase in breakdowns? Those figures come from an answer to an Assembly written question that you gave to me.

[31] **Alun Davies:** I know where the figures come from; they are the breakdown figures that we use with DEFRA. However, in terms of where we are, the £600-odd per badger vaccinated last year is a figure that includes set-up costs and the costs of establishing the programme. The figure this year will be substantially lower. We will not be in a position to publish that figure until the late autumn—it will certainly be before Christmas recess—but we are looking at a figure considerably lower than the figure that you quoted.

[32] There is no easy route to the eradication of bovine TB. I hear these speeches sometimes saying, ‘There is a silver bullet; you do this and you will eradicate bovine TB next year.’ That is nonsense. Everyone who understands the disease knows that you need a multifaceted approach that addresses the disease in the cattle population and in the wildlife population and which addresses the means of the disease passing between those two populations, and we are doing all of those different things.

[33] One of the difficult areas, which I am currently spending more time thinking about, frankly, is that of movement controls. If we are looking at some of the areas that do not have bovine TB at the moment, the real risk to the development of disease in those clean areas is cattle movement, and we need to get things such as that right. We also need to expand the vaccination programme, which is one of the points that Christianne made in her announcement yesterday, to bring more people on board to deliver that. However, at the moment, the approach that we are taking is one that will address the disease in different ways in different places.

[34] On the figures that you quoted in terms of increases in breakdowns, there are different figures describing different areas of the disease progression. Some figures show increases, others show decreases. We have seen the disease undulate over time, rather than grow exponentially or decline exponentially. The figures will increase one month, and will decrease the next. We understand that.

[35] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Ar gefn hynny, efallai bod testun i ni fel pwyllgor edrych arno o safbwynt ymateb y Llywodraeth i TB. Rydym wedi cael cyfnod bellach lle mae'r gwaith sy'n digwydd yn yr ardlaeodd dwys wedi bod yn weithredol. Clywsom y cyhoeddiad ddoe, ac rydym yn ymwybodol o'r *approach* gwahanol sydd yn digwydd yn Lloegr. Felly, byddwn yn awgrymu ei fod yn rhywbeth allai fod yn werth i ni fel pwyllgor dreulio ychydig o amser yn edrych arno.

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: On the back of that, there may be an issue for us to look at as a committee there in terms of the Government's response to TB. We have had a period in which the work happening in the intensive areas has been in place. We heard the announcement yesterday, and we are aware of the different approach being taken in England. I would therefore suggest that it would be something that it would be worthwhile for us as a committee to spend some time looking at.

[36] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** **Lord Elis-Thomas:** The Minister would very

Byddai'r Gweinidog yn croesawu hynny'n fawr iawn, rwy'n siŵr.

much welcome that, I am sure.

[37] **Alun Davies:** Fel un sydd wedi arwain ymchwiliad pan oeddwn yn Gadeirydd is-bwyllgor, byddwn yn hapus i wneud hynny.

Alun Davies: As someone who led an inquiry when I was a sub-committee Chair, I would be happy to do so.

[38] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Nid oeddwn yn mynd i ddweud hynny, ond rwy'n falch eich bod wedi.

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: I was not going to say that, but I am pleased that you did.

[39] O ran yr agenda 'Working Smarter', mae nifer o achosion yn codi'n achlysurol ynglŷn ag enghreifftiau lle mae *gold-plating* yn digwydd o safbwynt sut mae polisi yn cael ei weithredu, ac yn y blaen. Felly, a allwch roi diweddariad i ni ar rai o'r elfennau yr ydych yn teimlo sy'n cyfrannu yn fwyaf helaeth at yr agenda 'Working Smarter' ar hyn o bryd?

In terms of the 'Working Smarter' agenda, a number of cases crop up occasionally where there are examples of gold-plating in how policy is implemented, and so on. So, can you give us an update on some of the elements that you feel contribute most to the 'Working Smarter' agenda at present?

[40] **Alun Davies:** Ble ydych chi'n gweld y *gold-plating* hwn?

Alun Davies: Where do you see this gold-plating?

[41] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Er enghraifft, mae Undeb Amaethwyr Cymru yr wythnos hon wedi sôn am hollti carcasau defaid, a'r anghysondeb sydd, os edrychwch ar y dulliau a ddefnyddir yn Ffrainc a'r Iseldiroedd o gymharu ag ym Mhrydain. Rwy'n deall mai cyfrifoldeb yr Asiantaeth Safonau Bwyd yw hynny i raddau helaeth, ond byddwn yn disgwyl fod gan y Llywodraeth rôl o ran cynnal trafodaethau i godi rhai o'r materion hynny, neu onid ydych yn credu hynny?

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: For example, the Farmers Union of Wales this week has mentioned splitting sheep carcasses and the inconsistency that exists, if you look at the methods used in France and the Netherlands compared with in Britain. I understand that that is the Food Standards Agency's responsibility to a great extent, but I would expect the Government to have some role in holding discussions to raise some of those issues, or do you not think so?

[42] **Alun Davies:** Mae'r Asiantaeth Safonau Bwyd yn annibynnol ar lywodraeth. Rwy'n hapus i gynnal sgwrs gyda'r asiantaeth, os oes rhywun am i mi wneud, ond nid ydym yn gweithredu'r rheolau hynny. Y rheswm rwyf yn gofyn i chi am enghraifft o *gold-plating* yw oherwydd nid wyf yn credu bod y fath enghraifft. Rwy'n gweld fod Antoinette yn sibrwd rhywbeth wrthyhch. Os edrychwch ar yr hyn rydym wedi bod yn ei wneud yn ystod y ddwy flynedd ddiwethaf, rydym wedi bod yn gweithredu'r gyfraith fel ag y mae, fel y byddech yn disgwyl i unrhyw Lywodraeth gyfrifol ei wneud. Fodd bynnag, nid ydym wedi bod yn adeiladu ar hynny lle nad oes angen am hynny.

Alun Davies: The Food Standards Agency is independent of government. I am happy to have a conversation with the agency, if anyone wants me to do so, but we do not implement those rules. The reason that I ask for an example of gold-plating is because I do not believe that there is one. I see that Antoinette is whispering something to you. If you look at what we have been doing over the past two years, we have been implementing the law as it stands, as you would expect any responsible Government to do. However, we have not been building on that where there is no need to do so.

[43] Rydych yn gofyn i mi beth yw'r elfen bwysicaf o 'Working Smarter'. Yr elfen bwysicaf yw'r elfen anoddaf, sef y diwylliant rheoli. Mae gennym gyfrifoldebau statudol fel Llywodraeth; mae'n rhaid i ni weithredu'r gyfraith a gofynion y gyfraith. Pa un ai yw'r rheolau yn dod o San Steffan neu Ewrop, mae'n rhaid i ni wneud hynny yng Nghymru. Mae'n rhaid i ni ei wneud mewn ffordd sy'n hwyluso gwaith ffermwyr a, *frankly*, gwaith y Llywodraeth. Felly, rydym wedi dechrau ar broses o newid diwylliant a'r berthynas rhwng y diwydiant a'r Llywodraeth. Rwy'n credu fod gennym ffordd bell i fynd.

You ask what the most important element of 'Working Smarter' is. The most important element is the most difficult element, namely the management culture. We have statutory responsibilities as a Government; we have to implement the law and the requirements of law. Whether the rules come from Westminster or Europe, we have to do that in Wales. We have to do so in a way which facilitates the work of farmers and, frankly, the work of Government. So, we have started a process of changing the culture and the relationship between the industry and Government. I think that we have a long way to go.

10.45 a.m.

[44] Un o'r pethau cyntaf a wnaethom drïo eu gwneud oedd newid iaith a thôn llythyron. Roedd llythyron yn dod wrth y Llywodraeth a oedd bron a bod yn sarhaus ambell i waith wrth ei ddarllen. Rwy'n credu bod hynny'n warthus o beth pan fo rhywun yn darllen llythyr. Mae ffermwyr yn cael gormod o waith papur gan y Llywodraeth. Mae'n rhaid i ni leihau hynny. Mae'n rhaid i ni weithio gyda'n gilydd fel Llywodraeth—pob rhan o bob braich o'r Llywodraeth—ond hefyd mae'n rhaid i ni weithio gyda'r diwydiant. Os yw'r diwydiant eisïau i'r baich rheoleiddio gael ei leihau, mae'n rhaid i'r diwydiant dderbyn mwy o gyfrifoldeb. Nid wyf yn credu ein bod eto wedi cael y drafodaeth ddwfn sydd ei hangen i wneud hynny. Efallai y cawn y cyfle i wneud hynny drwy weithredu'r rheolau newydd ar PAC, ond, os ydych yn gofyn am fy marn bersonol, rwy'n credu ein bod yn gallu delio â llawer o faterion polisi, *the six-day standstill* a phethau felly, yn ddigon rhwydd, ond newid y diwylliant yw'r peth anodd.

One of the first things that we tried to do was to change the language and tone of letters. Letters were coming from the Government that were almost insulting at times when you read them. I think that that is appalling when you are reading a letter. Farmers are receiving too much paperwork from the Government. We have to reduce that. We have to work together as a Government—every part of every branch of Government—but also we have to work with the industry. If the industry wants a lighter regulatory load, the industry has to take on more responsibility. I do not believe that we have yet had that deep conversation that is needed to do that. Perhaps we may have the opportunity to do that in implementing the new CAP regulations, but, if you are asking for my personal opinion, I believe that we can deal with a lot of policy issues, the six-day standstill and things like that, quite easily, but cultural change is the difficult thing.

[45] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Roeddwn yn sylwi hefyd yn y llythyr mae Kevin Roberts wedi ei ysgrifennu atoch, yr ydych wedi ei gyhoeddi yn ddiweddar, fod cyfeiriad at *fallen stock* a'r angen i edrych ar y maes hwnnw o ran sut mae delio ag a chael gwared ar stoc. Yn amlwg, mae disgwyl i chi ymateb i'r datganiad. A ydych yn tybio bod hynny'n un enghraifft o sut y gellid rhoi neges glir i'r diwydiant bod y Llywodraeth yn sicr yn barod i edrych â meddwl mwy agored ar yr opsiynau a fyddai, efallai, yn lleihau'r baich

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: I also noticed in the letter written by Kevin Roberts to you, which you have published recently, that there is a reference to fallen stock and the need to look at that particular area of how we deal with and remove fallen stock. Clearly, you are expected to respond to that statement. Do you see that as one example of how you give a clear message to the industry that the Government is certainly willing to look with more of an open mind at the options that would, perhaps, reduce the burden on the

sydd ar y diwydiant yn y cyd-destun hwnnw? industry that context?

[46] **Alun Davies:** Gobeithio. Rwyf wedi derbyn pob un o argymhellion Kevin Roberts—cyhoeddais hynny ddydd Gwener, rwy'n meddwl. Wrth drafod stoc trig, roedd y broblem fwyaf gyda'r ffordd roedd llywodraeth leol yn gweithredu'r gyfraith, ac rwy'n derbyn hynny. Nid wyf yn meddwl bod y feirniadaeth o lywodraeth leol yn deg bod tro ac rwy'n credu bod llawer o bobl yn gweithio yn galed iawn yn ystod cyfnod y gwanwyn o dan bwysau mawr, felly ni fyddwn yn rhoi bai ar lywodraeth leol, ond dyna oedd yr ymateb yn llythyr Kevin Roberts.

Alun Davies: I hope so. I have accepted every one of Kevin Roberts's recommendations—I announced that on Friday, I believe. Talking about fallen stock, the biggest problem was with the way that local government was implementing the law, and I accept that. I do not believe that the criticism of local government is always fair and I believe that many people were working very hard during the springtime under great pressure, so I would not place any blame on local government, but that was the response in the letter from Kevin Roberts.

[47] Fodd bynnag, dywedaf hyn, Llyr: rydym yn ystyried opsiynau gwahanol ar gyfer delio â *fallen stock* a ffyrdd o ddatblygu'r wyddoniaeth i'n galluogi i ddelio â stoc trig mewn ffordd wahanol yn y dyfodol. Rwyf ti'n gwybod bod ymchwil yn cael ei wneud ar hyn o bryd ym Mangor. Liciwn i weld sut y gallwn ehangu ar hynny a gweithredu hynny ar lefel fferm.

However, I will say this, Llyr: we are considering alternative options for dealing with fallen stock and ways of developing the science to enable us to deal with fallen stock in a different way in the future. You know that research is being undertaken at present in Bangor. I would like to see how we can expand on that and implement that on a farm level.

[48] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Dyma'r cwestiwn olaf wrthyf, os caf i, Gadeirydd. Weinidog, roeddech yn sôn yn gynharach am y berthynas rhwng y Llywodraeth a'r diwydiant a'r pwysigrwydd o adeiladu perthynas weithio adeiladol a chonsensws o gwmpas rhai o'r materion sydd yn rhaid mynd i'r afael â nhw. Sut ydych yn meddwl y mae rhoi llwyfan i rywun fel George Monbiot yn y Sioe yn mynd i gyfrannu tuag at greu'r teimlad hwnnw o gonsensws?

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: This is the final question from me, if I may, Chair. Minister, you mentioned earlier the relationship between the Government and the industry and the importance of building a constructive working relationship and a consensus around some of the issues that have to be addressed. How do you think that giving a platform to someone like George Monbiot in the Royal Welsh will contribute towards creating that feeling of consensus?

[49] **Alun Davies:** Rwyf ti'n gwybod, Llyr, fy mod yn ddemocrat, ac rwy'n credu bod hawl i bawb i'w farn. Rwy'n credu hefyd fod angen ambell i waith i ni gynhyrfu'r pot. Mae angen i ni feddwl o ddirfif am ble yr ydym o ran y ffordd ymlaen o ran ein perthynas—rydym yn sôn am amaethyddiaeth yn y fan hon—gyda byd natur. Un peth mae'n rhaid i ni beidio â gwneud, Llyr, yw bod yn ddiog o ran ein meddwl. Hefyd, mae'n rhaid i ni beidio â bod yn rhy amddiffynol o ran y ffordd rydym yn dod at broblemau. Mae'n rhaid i ni ddatrys y broblem o golli *species* yn Nghymru. Mae hwn yn argyfwng. Roeddwn i'n trio dweud rhywbeth yn gynharach—fe welaist ti fy

Alun Davies: You will know, Llyr, that I am a democrat, and I believe that everybody has a right to their views. I also believe that we sometimes need to stir the pot. We must think seriously about where we stand as regards the way forward with regard to our relationship—we are talking about agriculture here—with the natural world. One thing that we must not do, Llyr, is to be lazy in our thinking. Also, we must not be too defensive in how we approach problems. We must resolve the problem of species loss in Wales. This is a crisis. I was trying to say something earlier—you saw the speech that I made at the launch of the nature of farming awards this morning. A crisis is looming and

araith pan oeddwn yn lansio'r *nature of farming awards* y bore yma. Mae argyfwng yn dod ac mae'n rhaid i ni ffeindio ymateb. Nid wyf yn gweld bai ar unrhyw un, a bod yn hollol onest. Rwy'n credu bod lot o bobl da wedi bod yn gwneud gwaith aruthrol yn y gorffennol. Fodd bynnag, mae adroddiadau megis 'State of Nature' yn dweud wrthym nad yw hynny'n gweithio. Dyna'r hyn maent yn dweud wrthym—

we must find a response to that. I do not blame anybody, to be completely honest. I think that a lot of good people have been doing excellent work in the past. However, reports such as 'State of Nature' tell us that that is not working. That is what they tell us—

[50] **Llyr Huws Gruffydd:** Ond, mae rhywun fel Monbiot—

Llyr Huws Gruffydd: But, when someone like Monbiot—

[51] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Os gwelwch yn dda, Llyr, nid wyf eisiau treulio dim mwy o amser yn trafod cyfarfod nad yw wedi digwydd eto. Weinidog, William Powell sy'n nesaf.

Lord Elis-Thomas: Please, Llyr, I do not want to spend any more time discussing a meeting that has not happened yet. Minister, William Powell is next.

[52] **William Powell:** Diolch, Gadeirydd. Minister, one of the lasting images that we will all carry with us from the first six months of this year is the consequences of the severe weather in March and April. Quite by chance this morning, I bumped into Robert Jenkins, who was our host for the visit that you undertook at Cilhaul Farm, Trefeglwys, back in April this year, with our Chair also in attendance. You were kind enough to come before our committee on 1 May to address some of those issues, and, at that time, you said that you were going to ask some of your officials to undertake a review of lessons that could be learnt from what happened in February and March. Could you give us a flavour of the initial findings of the review that took place?

[53] **Alun Davies:** Yes, I did provide you with a private invitation to that, of course, which you later publicised. I will be publishing a fuller response to all of those issues.

[54] I will tell you what; I will tell you the tone that characterises the conversations that we are having within Government at the moment. We have not published anything yet, and I do not expect us to publish anything substantial until the autumn—say, October this year. However, I can characterise the conversations that we are having within Government, if that helps the committee. In terms of where we are, I have accepted Kevin Roberts's recommendation on having contingency plans. I was very struck by that, and I am sure, Chair, that this is something that committee has returned to before. I saw a first draft of Kevin Roberts's letter to me the same day as the report on the Ruthin floods was published, and they both say very similar things about contingencies and the need for Government to respond in a more structured way.

[55] We have also been giving thought to how we respond to matters and issues where we require a trigger point. Take as an example when we have snow or a flood. When you have snow and a flood, it is very clear that it is very bad, but if you take now, for example, when we have had three or four weeks of hot weather, say that we have another week of it, and then another, and then another two weeks of hot weather; when do we say: 'Actually, there's a problem here, because we have drought conditions and serious issues that we might need to address with a particular farming sector, or another sector of the community'? At what point do we have that trigger? How do we create the structures that can create the need for that trigger without us necessarily, accidentally or otherwise, have somebody say, 'Hang on; something needs to happen here'? We need to structure Government's response to these things in a far more fundamental way than we do at present. We need to ensure that the local

resilience plans that local government have are fit for purpose to address such issues. Many farming families were cut off for days, if not for over a week, at the end of March and the beginning of April. How do we address that? How do we ensure that we have structures in place to address those issues?

[56] The other issue in the spring that we had was one of feed. Is there a way in which Government can contribute to addressing that, acting as an agent, if you like, or an agent of addressing those issues? So, we are having a lot of conversations about structured responses, putting in place the means of dealing with something before it happens so that we have the ability to create a structure that can be mobilised, when necessary. Also, how does Government ensure that we have a relationship with the industry—we are talking here about agriculture—to be able to deal with some matters? You know, Kevin Roberts has spoken about catastrophe cover in terms of insurance. There may well be ways in which we can take that forward, either with farming unions or with other bodies. We also know that the rural welfare charities have a hugely important role to play in many of these matters. So, how do we bring all those people together? Those are the conversations that we are having at the moment in Government about responding to an episode of that sort.

[57] Then there are the clearly much deeper issues, and this is something on which I would appreciate the committee's views, Chair, with regard to wider, more fundamental resilience in the uplands sector, and also in the red meat sector. I commissioned two reports, as you know, on this issue. The first was from Kevin Roberts, and you have seen his interim report. I also commissioned a report from Hybu Cig Cymru. I have seen an initial draft of that, and I think that Hybu Cig Cymru will be publishing it probably before we return from recess. However, it would be useful for us to learn some wider lessons from those reports in terms of taking things forward.

[58] **William Powell:** Minister—

[59] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** One more, very briefly.

[60] **William Powell:** Thank you, Chair.

[61] Minister, you mentioned the red meat sector. I have had some discussions over the last couple of the days with some fairly senior people within the sector, who have raised a couple of concerns with me. The first relates to the organic sector. I understand that somewhere in the order of 80 holdings have given up their organic accreditation since May this year, tying in with the end of the scheme, which I understand is in excess of 10% of the overall Welsh organic sector. They had real concern that, if this pattern were to be replicated and built up, it could be very detrimental to their being able to continue to provide the range and quantity of Welsh quality organic meats that they need for their customers. What comments can you make on that and what actions would you potentially undertake to secure the future of the Welsh organic sector?

[62] **Alun Davies:** I do not recognise the figure, but I certainly recognise the direction of travel. In terms of what has happened, these are individual businesses taking business decisions. I am not going to criticise or make a value judgment on individual farmers taking decisions about how best they farm their land. That is a matter for them and not for politicians. However, the organic sector as a whole is clearly an important part of the fabric, the jigsaw, of Welsh agriculture. The sector is suffering difficulties due to the current market conditions. There is no doubt about that. However, that is the market determining what products the market requires at different and particular times. There is a clear role for Government in helping to shape and regulate that market; I accept that. We certainly are looking at the moment and are talking to the organic sector about the way in which we will develop an organic programme within the next rural development plan. I am sure that you and

the committee will have views on that. So, we are certainly continuing to provide financial support for organic farming and the organic sector at the moment. We are continuing that. However, Bill, the market is driving change. The committee might want to take a view on the extent to which we wish the Government to intervene in this particular market. It might well be that we could expend a great deal of taxpayer resource, but, at the end of the day, every individual farmer has the right, and must have the right, to take individual business decisions for their business.

[63] **William Powell:** However, the contention of these producers was very much that there is demand there and they fear that the supply will—

[64] **Alun Davies:** We know that the demand is not great at the moment. We know that because of market conditions.

[65] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Galwaf ar Russell George, yna Keith Davies, sy'n dirprwyo ar ran Julie James—croeso, Keith— a Joyce Watson, sydd hefyd wedi ymddiheuro. **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I call on Russell George, then Keith Davies, who is substituting for Julie James—welcome, Keith—and Joyce Watson, who has also sent her apologies.

[66] I will then call on Antoinette Sandbach to begin round 2.

[67] **Russell George:** I would like to ask a question on biodiversity indicators. My question follows on from your comments on Llyr's last question, really. In January 2011, the sustainability committee of the third Assembly published a report on biodiversity in Wales—and you will know about that. Recommendation 14 said:

[68] 'the Welsh Government should immediately complete a review of the biodiversity research, data and monitoring work currently undertaken in Wales. From this, it should develop a shared research and monitoring strategy to strategically coordinate the research work being undertaken by different organisations, to prevent overlaps and to facilitate better access to data. This strategy should be in place by 2012, in time for the start of the Glastir scheme.'

[69] Could you provide some clarification as to why no work was completed to collate the data and audit them following the committee's report?

[70] **Alun Davies:** I believe that I am the only Member here who was a member of the committee that published that report. If you go through the transcript, Russell, you will see me saying things that I would not have said had I known that I would be the Minister responsible in a couple of years' time. [*Laughter.*]

[71] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** You need to tell us why, now that you are the Minister. [*Laughter.*]

[72] **Alun Davies:** I will help the committee and say that there was a very good session of the committee in November the previous year, where I described the failings of the public sector in these matters. Perhaps you would wish to review that.

11.00 a.m.

[73] In terms of where we are on data sets, I believe that your question, Russell, is the correct one, and you have submitted written questions to me on this matter. I have replied to them, but I do not know whether you have seen them yet. Changes have been made to the way that data sets are collected across the United Kingdom, and we have fitted in with some

of those decisions. We will be going to the ‘State of Nature’ summit later this morning, and I will be making an announcement there on how we collect data. The weaknesses that you identify are very true, fair and real. We have some very fragmented data available to us. We are seeking to create a data hub. I will be saying later this morning that I will put some of these structures in place over the coming months, and I will be quite happy to write to the committee, probably in September, to outline how I intend to do that.

[74] When I responded to the ‘State of Nature’ report at its launch in May, one of the points that I made was that the data collected by that report are very generic and very UK. We did not have the data that we required for Wales. We have sought to collect some of that data, and we have found that the data are incomplete and lacking a level of robustness that we would have hoped was there. So, we will be spending some time and resource on trying to provide the committee and others with greater and more robust data, and we will be doing that in the coming months.

[75] **Russell George:** Thank you for that, Minister. I have not had a chance to see your response to the questions yet—

[76] **Alun Davies:** They are not very helpful, I am afraid.

[77] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** You should do better, then. [*Laughter.*]

[78] **Alun Davies:** You are absolutely right, Chair; we should do indeed.

[79] **Russell George:** Can you also set out why the indicators on the percentage of species and habitats that are stable or increasing have been removed from the programme for government? What new indicators are being adopted to replace them?

[80] **Alun Davies:** You will see the answer to that when you get back to your computer. The reason for that change is because the indicators came from UK data sources, and those UK data sources have been changed. So, we are unable to access the same data sources. Therefore, we need to create our own data sources. It is a purely technical change, rather than a change of policy.

[81] **Russell George:** Thank you. I have a very quick last question, and I hope a quick answer in reply, on Natural Resources Wales. When do you intend to provide guidance to Natural Resources Wales on its statutory purpose?

[82] **Alun Davies:** Funnily enough, I was asked this question in the pub on Monday night. There is clearly a debate and discussion—no, I was not asked anything else—on this matter. So, I am glad that you asked the question, and it is perhaps necessary to clarify what my intentions are on this at present. I provided Natural Resources Wales with a remit letter upon its creation. I do not intend to offer any further formal guidance to it at present. In my view, the remit letter is open to some interpretation, which is where I think the question comes from. However, I would hope that the board of Natural Resources Wales will be able to make its own interpretation of the remit letter in a way that it believes best for that body. It is an arm’s length, independent body—it is not a body on which I want to impose too much of a straightjacket. So, I do not intend to issue any further guidance at present. I will do so if I am asked, and I will do so if the need becomes clear. I will be attending a meeting of the NRW board for my first time in September, and I am happy to have those conversations with the board—those meetings are public, of course. However, I do not intend at the moment to issue any further guidance.

[83] **Russell George:** You may well be asked to do so, because when Professor Peter Matthews came to give evidence on 19 June, we asked him questions around this. He said that

providing such guidance would be very useful to him. That was his evidence to us when he came to the committee in June.

[84] **Alun Davies:** I am aware of that. In terms of where we are at the moment, we will be talking to NRW. He talked about statutory guidance, of course, and I think that the context of that would have been the new responsibilities being given to NRW through the environment Bill. When the White Paper will be published in late autumn of this year and when it goes through its legislative process, there will be a requirement to provide statutory guidance as a consequence. We will do so at that time. In terms of following on from the remit letter, at present, it is not my intention to issue that guidance.

[85] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I call on Keith Davies and then Antoinette Sandbach to begin the second round.

[86] **Keith Davies:** Hoffwn ofyn cwstiwn ar yswiriant llifogydd, oherwydd cafwyd cytundeb cychwynnol rhwng Llywodraeth y Deyrnas Unedig a Chymdeithas Yswirwyr Prydain a ddaeth i ben ddiwedd mis Mehefin. Daeth etholwraig i fy ngweld brynhawn ddoe yn Llanelli oherwydd roedd wedi mynd i'r banc a gofyn am yswiriant ar gyfer ei chartref. Gofynnwyd am ei chyfeiriad. Rhoddodd ei chyfeiriad fel Iscoed yn Llanelli a dywedodd y bachgen yn y banc, ar ôl edrych ar y cyfrifiadur, nad oedd y banc yn gallu cynnig yswiriant iddi oherwydd ei bod yn byw ar *floodplain*. Ble ydym yn sefyll o ran Llywodraeth y Deyrnas Unedig a Chymdeithas Yswirwyr Prydain o ran edrych ar ôl pobl sy'n byw mewn ardaloedd tebyg?

Keith Davies: I would like to ask a question on flood insurance, because there was an initial agreement between the United Kingdom Government and the Association of British Insurers, which came to an end at the end of June. A constituent came to see me yesterday afternoon in Llanelli because she had gone to the bank to ask for home insurance. She was asked for her address. She gave her address as Iscoed in Llanelli and the chap in the bank said, after looking at the computer, that the bank could not offer her insurance because she lived on a floodplain. Where do we stand in relation to the United Kingdom Government and the Association of British Insurers as regards looking after people who live in similar areas?

[87] **Alun Davies:** Byddai'n hwylus petaet ti'n ysgrifennu ataf gyda'r enghraifft yr wyt ti newydd ei roi ar y *record*. Byddaf yn ymateb ar sail hynny. Fodd bynnag, rydym wedi dod i gytundeb gyda DEFRA—hynny yw, Llywodraeth y Deyrnas Unedig—ar hwn. Cefais gyfarfod â Richard Benyon obeutu mis yn ôl. Cawsom gytundeb gyda'r cwmnïau yswiriant. Mae gennym system newydd ar y gweill a bydd honno'n rhan o'r Bil Dŵr a gyflwynwyd i Dŷ'r Cyffredin obeutu chwe wythnos yn ôl. Felly, mae cytundeb â Llywodraeth y Deyrnas Unedig ac yr oedd ein swyddogion ni yn rhan ohono. Mae honno'n broses a strwythur newydd a bydd y Bil Dŵr yn sicrhau strwythur statudol i hynny. Os oes problemau'n codi yn y cyfamser, rwy'n hapus iawn i ddelio â nhw. Mewn pythefnos, byddaf yn ymweld â rhai ardaloedd yn Nyffryn Clwyd oedd wedi dioddef oherwydd hyn er mwyn cael y trafodaethau hyn. Mae'n hynod o bwysig bod

Alun Davies: It would be useful if you were to write to me citing the example that you have just put on the record. I will respond to you on that basis. However, we have reached an agreement with DEFRA—that is, the UK Government—on this. I had a meeting with Richard Benyon about a month ago. We reached an agreement with the insurance companies. We have a new system in the pipeline and that will be part of the Water Bill, which was presented to the House of Commons about six weeks ago. Therefore, there is agreement with the UK Government and our officials were party to that agreement. That is a new process and structure and the Water Bill will ensure a statutory structure for that. If problems arise in the meantime, I am very happy to deal with them. In a fortnight's time, I will visit some areas in the Vale of Clwyd that suffered because of this in order to have these discussions. It is exceptionally important that

pobl yn gallu cael yswiriant am y pris iawn. Mae'n rhaid imi ddweud bod Llywodraeth y Deyrnas Unedig wedi gwneud job arbennig o dda i sicrhau hynny.

people can access insurance at a reasonable price. I have to say that the UK Government has done an excellent job to ensure that.

[88] **Keith Davies:** Fodd bynnag, nid wyf yn credu yr oedd busnesau bach yn rhan o'r cytundeb cychwynnol.

Keith Davies: However, I do not believe that small businesses were part of the initial agreement.

[89] **Alun Davies:** Roedd yn rhaid i'r cytundeb gwreiddiol ddod i ben. Roedd yn gytundeb dros dro ac yn gytundeb nad oedd byth yn mynd i barhau oherwydd hynny, ymhlith rhesymau eraill. Felly, roedd yn rhaid ffeindio cytundeb tymor hir. Rwy'n gobeithio ein bod wedi gwneud hynny a drwy wneud hynny, rwy'n gobeithio y bydd pobl fel eich etholwraig chi ac eraill yn gallu cael yswiriant am bris rhesymol.

Alun Davies: The original agreement had to come to an end. It was a pro tempore agreement and was never intended to remain in place for that reason, and for other reasons. Therefore, we needed a long-term solution. I hope that we have been able to achieve that and, in so doing, I hope that people such as your constituent and others will be offered insurance at a reasonable price.

[90] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I call on Antoinette Sandbach and then William Powell.

[91] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Minister, now that we have reached some sort of conclusion on the common agricultural policy negotiations—and I appreciate that the multi-annual financial framework still has not concluded—could you comment on the statement that you made in Plenary on 4 June, that you would be undertaking a further review of the Glastir scheme? You indicated on 4 June that you would look to make it easier for people to enter and that you thought that it needed to be less complex, and that it also needed to focus on habitats that are crucial to us and that we are clearly not preserving or enhancing at the moment. I think that you are aware that there is consensus between organisations such as the RSPB, the Country Land and Business Association, the National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales that a part-farm scheme would be useful in preserving the kind of habitat that has been identified, perhaps, in the 'State of Nature' report as being under threat, or at least contributing greatly to biodiversity.

[92] I look forward to receiving a copy of your consultation document, which has not reached my Assembly inbox yet, but I am sure that it will in due course. However, you indicate in that that it is just administrative changes that you are proposing to make to Glastir. Could you clarify that point?

[93] **Alun Davies:** The consultation that we launched yesterday was, as I suggested in my statement on 4 June, a consultation on direct payments, not on Glastir. In terms of taking Glastir forward, I did say on 4 June that we will be reviewing Glastir. I have said on a number of occasions, of course, that will be reviewing Glastir before we fold it into the new rural development plan, and that is self-evidently the case.

[94] In terms of how we take this forward, it is my feeling that it would be difficult to overload people in terms of responding to two consultations running at the same time. We need to get the direct payments done and dusted. I accept that there are difficulties in doing that until we have the numbers from the budget discussions, but we are moving ahead with doing that. We launched it yesterday, and I spoke about it in the Assembly earlier this month. We are running the consultation on direct payments, and we will do that. At the moment, we are looking at bringing it to a conclusion in the middle of October. I will say to the committee, Chair, that we will consider and extend that consultation if agreement on the budget numbers is not reached in a reasonable time, because we believe that it is better to take

more time to take a good decision than to rush into a decision that people feel uncomfortable with. So, we will extend that consultation if necessary. We will also seek to take decisions in a collaborative way with the industry. We will not be simply issuing a written or oral statement stating, 'This is it; this is the decision that we have taken in conclave'; we will be doing that in a collaborative way. So, we will be following the process of iteration following that consultation closure.

[95] In terms of Glastir, we need to conclude our views on this, probably by about this time next year, in order to fold it into the new RDP. So, we do have time on our side to some extent. At the moment, my thinking is that that we would launch a formal consultation on the new Glastir, either towards the end of this calendar year or early in the new year, and make announcements on that in the spring or early summer of next year. That is a very rough and ready timescale, but it is a timescale that I hope that we would be able to stick to, or certainly stay within.

[96] In terms of where we get to from that, obviously I would not want to start a consultation by saying, 'These are the conclusions of that consultation'; however, I have said on a number of occasions, over the last few weeks and months, that issues like part-farm schemes are essential elements of any new scheme, but we also need to regionalise the advanced part of Glastir in a more coherent way. I think that we need to de-clutter and decomplexify it; we need to reduce the administrative burden for individual farmers, landowners, land managers and the Government; and, we need to have far greater and clearer objectives, not simply in terms of maintaining a habitat in good condition here for a specific amount of time, but the purpose of why we do that in terms of species and so on. Therefore, I think that we do need to look at Glastir.

[97] I will conclude on this, Chair, as I know that time is running away. I think that we need to look at different ways of trusting people more. One of the criticisms that I would make of Glastir is that it is, essentially, the Government telling farmers, landowners or managers, 'This is what's best for your land and you need to fit into our grid and our criterion'. What I would like to see—and this is why I am launching a new fund later this morning on habitat creation and habitat maintenance—is us being able to say to people who have land, 'What do you think is best on your land? Give us your ideas as well', so that we have the opportunity to almost crowd-source ideas for enhancing biodiversity, entrenching some habitat creation. I want to see us planting far more trees than we do in this country at the moment. I want us to be able to do that. I do not know whether we can do it within the Glastir envelope. The money that I am announcing later this morning is domestic funding, not RDP funding, and it is new money. We will be making that investment in the future of the Welsh natural environment. At the moment, I am entirely pragmatic about whether we put all these different ideas into the Glastir basket and do it through the RDP, or whether we do some of this through domestic funding as well. However, those are decisions that we will take eventually.

[98] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** William Powell has the final question.

[99] **William Powell:** Minister, you have always been a powerful advocate of the food and drink sector, and obviously that is now at the very heart of your agenda. At the sustainable food conference of the Institute of Welsh Affairs in early June, you announced that you would be unveiling a plan to take things forward in the autumn. You also made reference to the new board that you will be setting up. Have you given further, detailed thought at this time to the remit that the board will have?

11.15 a.m.

[100] Allied to that, there has been some concern in the sector at your decision to suspend

the True Taste awards. What consultation or soundings did you and your team undertake before doing that? Do you have any concern about the sensibilities and the concerns of producers who have regarded that over the years as an important badge for their own businesses and an important currency of credibility and quality within the sector?

[101] **Alun Davies:** You will have seen from the business statement issued last week that I will be making a statement on those matters on 24 September, which is the first business day back from our summer recess. I will be making a full oral statement on a new plan for food at that time. That will be the comprehensive—I hope it will be, I should say; it is for others to judge, of course—statement of food policy that you seek. We have been working with the current strategy for some time now, and my feeling is that if we have a strategy from Government, it must include actions and timetables, and it must have accountability hardwired into it. The current strategy does not have any of those things. So, I want to develop a strategy that links support for primary production with other elements of the supply chain, such as processing and the promotion and marketing of Welsh food and products, in Wales, in the United Kingdom, in Europe and elsewhere. I want to link the work that Hybu Cig Cymru does to the work that Farming Connect does, and I want to develop that model in other sectors as well and along the supply chains.

[102] We do need to do all that. We also need to address issues of food in society. You know, 2,000 people in my constituency had their Christmas dinner from a food bank. There are enormous issues with poverty and diet in Wales at the moment, and we need to address those issues at the same time as education and health issues. That is the sort of remit that we have in place. I do not have agreement with my ministerial colleagues on all of these matters yet; I am still sketching these things out for the committee without that, because we have not had the time yet to get full agreement within Government on these matters.

[103] I will address the issue of True Taste, however, which you raised in your question. I have not received the feedback that you appear to have received, Bill. There has been no negative coverage in the press or media of this, if you look at it. We hold a number of different sector meetings with the food production sector in Wales, and I have to say that the response to my announcement last week was overwhelmingly positive. If you want to look back at the genesis of this decision, you will see that it comes from what we called the Welsh food summit that we held in the National Botanic Garden of Wales last year—I think that it was last July. About 200 or 300 food producers from across Wales came and discussed food policy and what we should be doing and where we should be going, and this was the overwhelming view of that meeting, Bill. So, our focus now is this: we have a brand that is called ‘food and drink from Wales’, which I think says what it does, and we have launched a number of sub-strategies this week. That is the drinks initiative that we launched on Monday—I saw that you were enjoying that. [*Laughter.*] I am sure that you have enjoyed it at other times, too.

[104] **William Powell:** Absolutely.

[105] **Alun Davies:** I know that the Chair of the committee values greatly the work done by Welsh wine producers.

[106] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** And the whole of his family—[*Inaudible.*]. [*Laughter.*]

[107] **Alun Davies:** So, we are working on all of those. I know that time is running away from us, Chair, but I would just like to say that we are investing far more of the resource available to us now in trade promotion and trade marketing, because what we need is to develop food production, from primary production through processing and on to shelves, where consumers can buy this food. We are working with supermarkets—I have been with three supermarkets so far this week, talking about how we can help to support food producers

whose produce will one day be on the shelf of a supermarket, but is not there yet—to complete the journey. The investment that we are making at the moment is an economic investment that looks to develop the food sector in Wales as an industrial policy and as an industrial sector. We need to do cultural tourism and the rest of the stuff, such as promoting food festivals. I do a lot of that. We will be doing that as well. However, Bill, the response that I have seen over the last few weeks has been overwhelmingly positive. I am happy to give the committee the evaluation conducted by food producers of the new support provided to them in the food and drink exhibition at the ExCeL centre in London a couple of months ago, who said that all their sales leads and volume sales are up, and that the new branding and the new approach is something that is seeing real results in real sales.

[108] **William Powell:** Minister, could you also give us assurance that fishery products will also be included within that—

[109] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** No, sorry, you will have to deal with fisheries by letter.

[110] **Alun Davies:** I did open the Aberaeron seafood festival two weeks ago, where I made an excellent speech on that matter, which I am happy to repeat at any time. I will give you that speech, if you like.

[111] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Diolch i'r Gweinidog am ei ymrwymiad i roi i ni y gwerthusiad o effaith ac effeithlonrwydd y brand newydd. Gwnawn yn sicr ystyried hynny. Diolch yn fawr i'r Gweinidog a'i swyddogion am eu presenoldeb ac am ymateb i'n cwestiynau. Diolch yn fawr i aelodau'r pwyllgor. Diolch yn arbennig i'r ffermwyr ifanc unwaith eto am gynnig croeso i ni i'r lle yma, ac i'r gynulleidfa o randdeiliaid o ar draws y sector. Rwy'n credu mai dyma'r gynulleidfa orau rydym wedi ei chael hyd yn hyn, ac mae'n amlwg y byddwch eisiau dod eto y flwyddyn nesaf, fel rwy'n gwybod y bydd y Gweinidog.

Lord Elis-Thomas: I thank the Minister for his commitment to give us the evaluation of the new brand's effectiveness and efficiency. We will certainly consider that. I thank the Minister and his officials for their attendance and for responding to our questions. I thank members of the committee. I especially thank the young farmers once again for welcoming us to this place, and to the audience of stakeholders from across the sector. I believe that this is the best audience that we have had so far, and you will clearly want to come again next year, as I know will the Minister.

[112] **Alun Davies:** Bydd y Gweinidog am fod yma, pwy bynnag y bydd hi neu ef.

Alun Davies: The Minister will want to be here, whoever she or he might be.

[113] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Pwy bynnag fydd y Gweinidog, fel y dywedais. [*Chwerthin.*] Byddwn yn cyfarfod yn nhŷ'r Llywodraeth maes o law. Diolch yn fawr.

Lord Elis-Thomas: Whoever the Minister will be, as I said. [*Laughter.*] We will meet in the Government building in due course. Thank you.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.21 a.m.
The meeting ended at 11.21 a.m.*