

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-536
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/00518/14

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions committee
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April 2014

Dear William Powell AM

Thank you for your letter of 7 April concerning the petition submitted by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) about large scale dairy farming in Wales.

My decision to allow the planning appeal against refusal of planning permission for the expansion of Lower Leighton Farm is presently the subject of a High Court challenge. As a consequence it is not appropriate for me, other Welsh Ministers, or Welsh Government officials to discuss the case or any issues arising from it.

The Welsh Government is seeking to stimulate the investment and innovation needed to create the conditions to support long-term economic growth in rural Wales. It will use the next Rural Development Programme (RDP) to increase sustainability, resilience and diversity, and manage our natural resources efficiently in order to create a more prosperous future for Wales. It will also seek to put in place conditions to allow farm businesses to grow, become more efficient and economically viable with less public financial support. The Welsh Government does not have a policy on the scale of a farming enterprise and will continue to support farms of all sizes.

In terms of animal welfare, the UK continues to achieve and put in place the highest animal welfare provisions, and is among the highest in achieving standards in a very competitive and retail driven market. The UK's Governments have been at the forefront of implementing higher standards domestically but are active both on a European and international level in trying to improve standards.

In Wales and the UK, the Animal Welfare Act 2006 protects the welfare of animals on-farm and makes it an offence to cause suffering to any animal. The Act also contains a "duty of care to animals" - this means that anyone responsible for an animal must take reasonable steps to ensure the animal's welfare needs are met. A person must look after an animal's welfare as well as ensure that it does not suffer. In addition, the Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Regulations 2007 specify in detail the welfare conditions under which livestock and animals used in producing food, must be kept.

The health and welfare requirements of farmed animals are no different in a herd or flock of 10 animals to that of 1000 animals. The infrastructure, husbandry and management practices will vary and differ in scale, but the need to provide the same minimum level of care remains - the legal minimum health and welfare requirements apply to both.

In terms of national planning guidance, Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities provide planning guidance about rural and agricultural development; neither makes specific reference to dairy farming. However, it is considered that existing planning policy and advice provides sufficient flexibility to allow the issues raised by dairy farms (or other types of farm), both large and small, to be properly assessed and determined on their planning merits.

PPW states that planning policies, decisions and proposals should support initiative and innovation, and avoid placing unnecessary burdens on enterprises so as to enhance economic success of both urban and rural areas, helping businesses to maximise their competitiveness.

Local planning authorities are required to ensure that the economic benefits associated with a proposed development are understood, and that these are given equal consideration with social and environmental issues. PPW indicates that planning policies for economic development must provide developers and others with scope to make choices to secure the efficient and effective use of resources and land. The expansion of existing businesses located in the open countryside should be supported provided there are no unacceptable impacts on local amenity.

Technical Advice Note 6 states that strong rural economies are essential to support sustainable and vibrant rural economies. A strong rural economy can help to promote social inclusion and provide the financial resources necessary to support local services and maintain attractive and diverse natural environments and landscapes.

Planning Policy Wales Chapter 7 Economic Development was revised in November 2012, and TAN 6 was revised in July 2010. I do not feel it is necessary to review or make changes to PPW or TAN 6 at this point in time, and have not been provided with specific evidence to suggest otherwise.



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