



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

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

Dydd Mercher, 20 Mai 2015
Wednesday, 20 May 2015

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

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

Mick Antoniw	Llafur Labour
Mohammad Asghar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Rhun ap Iorwerth	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Alun Ffred Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur Labour
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

**Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance**

Tony Clark	Pennaeth Cyllid, Llywodraeth Cymru Head of Finance, Welsh Government
Rebecca Evans AS/AM	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Dirprwy Weinidog Ffermio a Bwyd) Assembly Member, Labour (Deputy Minister for Farming and Food)
Andrew Slade	Cyfarwyddwr Amaeth, Bwyd a'r Môr, Llywodraeth Cymru Director of Agriculture, Food and Marine, Welsh Government
Yr Athro/Professor Christianne Glossop	Prif Swyddog Milfeddygol Cymru, Llywodraeth Cymru Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales, Welsh Government

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

Alun Davidson	Clerc Clerk
Peter Hill	Ail Glerc Second Clerk
Nia Seaton	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Adam Vaughan	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:31.
The meeting began at 09:31.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Rwy'n eich **Alun Ffred Jones:** I welcome you all to the croesawu chi i gyd i'r pwyllgor. Mae Rhun committee. Rhun ap Iorwerth is substituting ap Iorwerth yn dirprwyo ar gyfer Llyr, ac for Llyr, and Mohammad Asghar is here until

mae Mohammad Asghar yma nes bydd aelod llawn yn cael ei benodi i'r pwyllgor ar ran y Toriaid. Ac mae Jeff Cuthbert yn absennol ac yn ymddiheuro. A gaf i groesawu'r Gweinidog, Rebecca, a'i thîm? Rydych chi'n gwybod am y rheolau—a gaf i jest ailadrodd? Os bydd yna larwm tân, dilynwch y swyddogion allan. Ffonau symudol wedi'u diffodd, os gwelwch ei fod yn dda. Rydym ni'n gweithredu yn ddwyieithog, felly mi allwch chi gyfrannu yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg, ac rydych chi'n gwybod am y microffonau. A oes unrhyw Aelod eisiau datgan buddiant o dan Reol Sefydlog 2.6? Nac oes. Wel, fel yr oeddwn i'n dweud, ymddiheuriadau gan Llyr—Rhun ap Iorwerth yn dirprwyo—ac mae Mohammad Asghar yma hefyd fel aelod.

a full member is appointed to the committee on behalf of the Conservatives. And Jeff Cuthbert is absent and sends his apologies. May I welcome the Minister, Rebecca, and her team? You know about the rules—and I'll just repeat them, if I may. If there is a fire alarm, please follow the officials out of the room. Please switch off mobile phones. We operate bilingually, so you can contribute in English or Welsh, and you know about the microphones. Does any Member wish to declare an interest under Standing Order 2.6? No. Well, as I was saying, apologies from Llyr—Rhun ap Iorwerth is substituting—and Mohammad Asghar is also here as a member.

[2] **William Powell:** Chair, can I just declare an interest as a partner in a farm that's involved with a single farm payment application on an annual basis?

[3] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Océ, diolch yn fawr. **Alun Ffred Jones:** Okay, thank you very much.

09:32

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Ffermio a Bwyd: Craffu ar Faterion Amaethyddol **Deputy Minister for Farming and Food: Agriculture Scrutiny**

[4] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Rwy'n croesawu'r Gweinidog atom ni'r bore yma am y sesiwn yma o graffu. Diolch yn fawr iddi hi am fod yn bresennol, a'i swyddogion. A fydddech chi gystal â chyflwyno chi eich hunan er mwyn y record, a'r swyddogion hefyd, os gwelwch ei fod yn dda? Diolch. **Alun Ffred Jones:** I'd like to welcome the Minister to the committee this morning for this session of scrutiny. I'd like to thank her for being present, and her officials. Would you please introduce yourself for the record, and your officials, please? Thank you.

[5] **The Deputy Minister for Farming and Food (Rebecca Evans):** Yes, Rebecca Evans, Deputy Minister for Farming and Food, and, to my right, Christianne Glossop, Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales, Andrew Slade, director of agriculture, food and marine, and Tony Clark, head of finance for natural resources.

[6] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Diolch yn fawr iawn. Dyna ni. Iawn, mae gennym ni nifer o gwestiynau rydym ni eisiau mynd drwyddyn nhw—rwy'n annog yr Aelodau i fod yn fyr ac i'r pwynt, ac i chithau, Weinidog, neu'ch swyddogion hefyd, i ymateb yn yr un ffordd i weld a allwn ni gyrraedd cymaint o'r cwestiynau â phosibl. Felly, Rhun ap Iorwerth, cewch chi gychwyn â'r cwestiwn cyntaf ar y polisi amaeth cyffredin. **Alun Ffred Jones:** Thank you very much. There we are. Now, we have a number of questions that we need to go through—I ask Members to be brief and to the point, and for you, Minister, and your officials also, to respond in the same manner, to see if we can get through as many questions as possible. So, Rhun ap Iorwerth, you can start with the first question, which is about the common agricultural policy.

[7] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Bore da iawn i chi. A gaf i ofyn yn gyntaf ynglŷn â'r argymhellion ar symleiddio'r CAP, ac a ydy Llywodraeth Cymru wedi ymateb i alwad y Comisiwn am symleiddio'r CAP? A beth a fyddai blaenoriaethau Llywodraeth Cymru wrth fynd i lawr llwybr o symleiddio?

Rhun ap Iorwerth: A very good morning to you. May I first of all ask about the recommendations on CAP simplification, and whether the Welsh Government has responded to the Commission's calls for suggestions on how CAP could be simplified? And what would the Welsh Government's priorities be for simplification?

[8] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes, we did respond to that request for ideas for simplification from the European Commission. I've met with the commissioner, Phil Hogan, several times myself, and, obviously, we have these discussions in our pre-council meetings every time we meet together, on a monthly basis usually, in Brussels or Luxembourg, with my ministerial colleagues from across the UK. Simplification is often on the agenda, and I've also written to Liz Truss to inform her representations, because, of course, this is being taken forward on a member state level.

[9] Our key concerns, really, are the inadequacy of Commission guidance and conflicting information that the regulations and the supporting documents often present to us. That makes it difficult for Welsh Government to provide very clear advice to our farmers. It also makes things confusing for our farmers as well, so that's one of the key areas. We'd like increased freedom for member states to develop our own processes for identifying and defining active farmer greening and the young farmer scheme. We're also seeking, really, a proportional approach to administrative and control burdens for Welsh Government. A case in point that I've highlighted to colleagues and the Commission would be EID tolerance rates for tag identification, and so on. It is required at 100 per cent at the moment, but our industry tells us that's going to be really hard to meet. We made a series of 27 different recommendations regarding simplification.

[10] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Is the grazed woodland issue one of the issues that you will be seeking to address through simplification?

[11] **Rebecca Evans:** That is something that we've addressed—well, we've asked for it to be addressed through simplification, but we're also seeking assurances on that from the European Commission. I have to say that officials have engaged with the European Commission at the very highest level and we've been unable to get the assurances that we need that including groups of trees as landscape features, for example, wouldn't result in Welsh Government being given serious levels of disallowance in the future. So, I can't really take courses of action that would increase our risk of disallowance.

[12] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I don't know if I can go on to the basic payment scheme under CAP as well. I obviously realise that this is subject to consultation. Now can you confirm that the timetable that you had in mind for announcing the outcome, or your response to the consultation, will still be July?

[13] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes, it is still my intention to make an announcement in July.

[14] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Can you confirm whether you'll be trying to avoid a situation whereby it will be a single-rate payment throughout Wales? Is that what you're trying to achieve?

[15] **Rebecca Evans:** I think we set out in our consultation what we're trying to achieve, and our key aims really are—well, we set out a list of seven different priorities, but the top two were—to make payments within the window for farmers—clearly that's got to be a

priority—and the second priority is for whatever we do to be soundly within European Commission rules. I don't think it would be appropriate to speculate or make any comment on what the outcome of the consultation might be.

[16] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I appreciate that entirely, but given the concerns in lowland farming areas that going for a single-rate payment would be hugely detrimental in terms of skewing the market on who has the ability to rent and purchase land, and so on, is that what you're trying to achieve—a situation where you go from what was potentially an unfair situation before, which meant you had to change, to another disastrously unfair single-rate scheme?

[17] **Rebecca Evans:** I have to be careful what I say because we are in a consultation phase at the moment, so I think I'll take the question in the round, really, in terms of what we're trying to achieve for the industry more generally, right across Wales. We have to take decisions that are in the best interests of the entire industry; we can't take decisions just for a certain sector or certain area. In the round, what we're trying to achieve is a profitable, resilient agricultural industry for the future, which is actually less reliant on these basic payments anyway. To do that we utilise the pillar 1 payments, but also the RDP and pillar 2 payments play a huge role in helping us develop that resilient and financially sound, profitable, professional business for the future. I'm sorry I can't answer your question more specifically, but I think I might get myself in hot water if I did.

[18] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I'm sure we'll come on to how the RDP can play into that later on.

[19] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Russell.

[20] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, with regard to scattered trees, I and other Members have been lobbied quite hard on this issue. I wonder if you can just talk to us about your approach on that.

[21] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes, I considered the matter back in February, when we looked at the different options that were available to us under the European Commission rules. We chose the option that would be most advantageous for the industry in Wales, and as I explained in my previous answer to Rhun, we had the discussions right at the top level of the European Commission and we just weren't able to receive the assurances that we need that taking an approach that other countries and other member states and regions have taken would be a safe option for us in terms of not receiving disallowance in the future.

[22] **Russell George:** Could you explain in particular the reason why you are taking a different approach to other areas of the UK? They've taken a very different approach. I wondered what the difference is. Do you believe that those other areas of the UK, the Governments in the other administrations, have handled this in a wrong way? How did they come to that different approach compared to your considerations, Minister?

[23] **Rebecca Evans:** I wouldn't want to make any comment on ministerial decisions for other countries—

[24] **Russell George:** Yes, I understand.

[25] **Rebecca Evans:** —but the decisions I have to make have to be the right ones for the farming industry in Wales because it wouldn't just be disallowance for Welsh Government and, of course, we don't have a large disallowance fund, so that would be coming out of education, health, agriculture and so on; also, there would be fines involved for farmers as well, so I don't think that would be welcome. But, as I say, we haven't received the

assurances that approaches that are taken elsewhere would result in us not risking disallowance, and we just don't have the funds available. We're talking millions of pounds of funding for what is actually quite a small area of land. We've made an estimate that we're talking about 3 per cent of the land claimed under BPS, which is around 41,000 hectares. It's also worth remembering as well that the basic payments scheme pot of money is the same size regardless of what we do about trees within it. So, all the result of including the trees would mean is that the average rate per hectare would fall slightly.

[26] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Okay. Are you still on pillar 1?

[27] **Jenny Rathbone:** Yes.

[28] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Okay. Jenny.

[29] **Jenny Rathbone:** I'd welcome clarification of this. Could you just describe to us what England's doing, just so we understand the difference between—you know, what your decision is?

[30] **Rebecca Evans:** I believe that England have included trees in their cross-compliance rules. Perhaps Andrew can give us more detail as to how that works.

[31] **Mr Slade:** Yes. We don't have complete detail on how England or other parts of the UK plan to handle this and, as the Minister says, every managing authority in rural payments terms and every paying agency—and Rural Payments Wales is our paying agency within Welsh Government—has to take its own view on the level of risk in informing Ministers as to which decision to go for. We understand that colleagues in England are likely to include trees in their cross-compliance conditions. We have spoken to the commission repeatedly about this. They say that it might be possible to go down that route but they cannot give us any assurances that, when the auditors came, they would take the same view. As the Minister says, that's potentially quite a considerable disallowance for Welsh Government and for Welsh farmers if we get it wrong.

[32] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, but there are risks to trees in all this, are there not?

[33] **Mr Slade:** I think the risks to trees are actually very minimal here. Cross-compliance conditions generally require that trees are not cut down, subject to a very small minimum threshold that you're allowed to do as part of good land management, but in other respects farmers should not be chopping down trees—it's against the rules in order to receive their wider basic payment. So, I don't consider that there is a great risk to trees as is perhaps being suggested in some places. We also have the potential to use pillar 2, the rural development programme, to work with woodlands and developing woodlands more generally.

[34] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. So, are you satisfied that the aerial surveillance that you can do these days will be sufficient to protect trees from being knocked down in remote areas?

[35] **Rebecca Evans:** I have to say that we haven't had any evidence of this taking place at all. It would have had to have happened quite quickly in the sense that the concerns were only raised by organisations perhaps a month ago and the deadline was on 15 May, so it would have had to have happened quite quickly. We haven't even received any anecdotal evidence of this happening and we have asked people, if they had evidence of people felling trees illegally, to let Welsh Government know and our inspectors would call. But we haven't had any evidence whatsoever; not even one case.

[36] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, well that's very good. Just going back to the fact that the consultation on Commissioner Hogan's call for simplification is being conducted at UK level,

given the dominance of big dairy and big livestock concerns in England, which, obviously, is the dominant country, does that give sufficient weight to the needs of small farmers and new entrants, which I know is one of the Welsh Government's priorities?

[37] **Rebecca Evans:** I think it does. I think that's because we do play such an active role in terms of attending council. I know that not all the previous Ministers have attended council regularly. I do and those pre-council meetings are a really good opportunity to set out what's important for Wales. In the spirit of good working, I have found, I have to say, that UK colleagues have very much taken on board our Welsh concerns, and we often manage to get the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Ministers to refer to Wales in their speaking notes and in the arguments that they make during council as well. So, I think just having that ongoing dialogue and engagement really is vitally important for Wales.

[38] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. My final question was really to look at the level of indebtedness of farming businesses. I wondered if you'd done any analysis of that in the run-up to how you're going to take forward the rural development programme.

[39] **Rebecca Evans:** We do look very carefully at farm incomes and what that means for farm businesses. We have an annual report on farm incomes. The report, actually, is a retrospective report, which I don't think everybody always understands. We're looking back at what happened the previous year. So, although it's called a forecast, it's a forecast of what has happened, if you like, which does confuse, I think, from time to time. But I'll ask Andrew to give an overview of farm debt.

[40] **Mr Slade:** The farm business survey, as the Minister says, picks up on levels of indebtedness—the level of gearing that each business that participates in the survey is experiencing, or runs, as part of their business plan. So, we have quite a level of detail there. More generally, we talk to the banks on a regular basis, but people are understandably, beyond those confines, a bit coy in terms of saying how they are placed in terms of their balance sheets and what they're borrowing. On the whole, farming, where you're not involved in the tenanted sector, is asset-rich, but in places, income-poor. That's what's often said about agriculture, but levels of borrowing against that will depend on a range of factors, not just the value of the farm, but the quality of the business plan and whether there are other options to bring diversified income onto the holding.

[41] **Jenny Rathbone:** We have record low levels of interest rates at the moment. Whether that's passed on to businesses is another story, but is there any concern in your mind that farms might be entering into loans that will become very difficult to pay once interest rates go up?

[42] **Rebecca Evans:** I think that that would apply to any business, if you like, that has decided to take on loans. I mean, that's a risk and it's a decision for the individual farm business. What we can do is help farmers make good decisions financially, and we do that through Farming Connect, which is part of our rural development programme. That's about sharing information, advice and support across the full range of the kind of information that farmers will need. One of the things that we're keen to do is drive the industry forward to become more business-minded and business-focused. So, under the next RDP, we'll be requiring a higher level of demonstration of business acumen, if you like. So, if we're giving a grant, we need to know how that fits in with your wider business plan. So, it's no longer about making an application for a grant to get the money just for that grant. This is about showing us what your plan is for your business, how your plan for your business is helping the Welsh Government meet its Welsh Government programme for government aims and aspirations, and how what you're seeking in terms of grant funding's going to make you, as a farmer, more sustainable in the future. It's going to help you farm more sustainably as well in terms of retail, climate change and environmental obligations.

[43] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Right. Okay—

[44] **Jenny Rathbone:** On the RDP?

[45] **Alun Ffred Jones:** No, just a couple of questions before you come to that. How many farmers submitted their applications by the 15 May deadline and how many are thought to be outstanding?

[46] **Rebecca Evans:** The total number of applications received without late penalty was 16,959. Of those, 12,204 were online and 4,755 were on paper. It's impossible to say how many are outstanding, of course, because this is a new basic payment scheme. So, we don't know what 100 per cent will look like until 1 June of this year. But compared to last year, it's 626 down on the total received last year. We're doing some initial analysis to understand what might be the cause of that. Around 200, we expect, will be paid by the Rural Payments Agency in England because of cross-border considerations. So, that application won't need to be completed until 16 June. Then, there are farmers who have come out of this basic payment scheme because they don't meet the 5-hectare threshold as well. So, on the whole, I think that this is an outstanding achievement in terms of getting such a high level of people online, but also of getting such a high number of people applying within the deadline in what has been a complex first year.

[47] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Good. Thank you. And a question on the CAP IT project: how are the latest estimates of costs compared to the original estimates?

[48] **Rebecca Evans:** The original estimated cost, back in July 2013, was £16 million. The current estimate is £22 million, and that's because the scope of the project has changed as we've come to understand in more detail what's required of us under the rural development programme. It's worth comparing, of course, to the situation over in England where they've spent £150 million on their online services, over £100 million in Scotland, and £56 million in Northern Ireland. So, again, we've performed extremely well in what we've been able to deliver in a relatively small budget.

[49] **Alun Ffred Jones:** What's the reason for the good performance?

[50] **Mr Slade:** Well, there could be quite a long answer to that question, and you've asked us to be brief, Chair, so I will make a couple of points: 1) we have stuck with our existing system, which works well. So, we've adapted that and modified that, rather than throwing all of the balls up in the air and seeing where they land. We've also got a very experienced team, who have been preparing as best they can for this reform for some time. We have a slight complication, as the Minister alluded to earlier, in terms of the fact that we've got to fit a payment model to the system, when we've finished the consultation process, but, working with the existing system and some pretty comprehensive work, or activity, that's been undertaken in preparation for this reform, we're using or adapting the system that we've got to deliver the new arrangements.

[51] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Sounds good.

[52] Symudwn ymlaen, felly, i'r cynllun We'll move on, then, to the rural datblygu gwledig. development plan.

[53] On the rural development plan, Jenny to begin with and then William Powell.

[54] **Jenny Rathbone:** One of the problems that I have with the pillar 1 payment is that it's not open to farmers of less than 5 hectares, and that obviously is a big barrier to new

entrants. I just wondered if you could tell us how the RDP might be used to support new entrants, particularly in areas where there's insufficient food grown to support local needs—I'm obviously referring to fruit and vegetables in particular.

[55] **Rebecca Evans:** I should say that the decision to go with a 5-hectare minimum, in terms of allowing farmers to enter the basic payment scheme, was taken on the basis that the BPS is about producing food, and you can't really be a large producer or even a significant producer with 5 hectares. We haven't had any negative feedback, as far as I'm aware, in terms of that decision. Also, the amount of money that could be attracted under the basic payments scheme for 5 hectares would be almost—well, it would be extremely small, so it wouldn't be make or break by any means for any kind of new entrant or otherwise into the industry. What we can do under the rural development programme is offer—well, we'll be offering a series of grants, but we're taking a whole supply chain approach, so, perhaps looking at dairy, red meat or food production, and we can be looking there at what we can do to support smaller producers, because we're taking, as I said, a whole supply chain approach, which is a new approach this time. So, that will include businesses of all sizes.

[56] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. I agree that, with dairy and livestock, it's not possible to do much with less than 5 hectares, but you can do a great deal with less than 5 hectares in fruit and veg. Therefore, how much concentration will there be on developing this under-developed sector?

[57] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, we've started work on our agriculture strategy, which I mentioned to committee last time I was here. We'll be publishing a consultation document on that on 4 June at an all-Wales farming conference, and, within that, we'll be demonstrating that, as well as having an overarching vision and strategy, we will have these sectoral plans, and that will include a specific plan for the horticulture industry. I know that there is more that we can do for horticulture in Wales.

[58] I do get letters quite frequently from individuals who are seeking to enter farming or seeking to upscale their business or increase what they do, but I don't think I've ever had a letter from somebody who has said that they want to get into horticulture. So, I think there's certainly more that we could do in terms of raising awareness, really, that that is something that you can also do in Wales, alongside our large sectors of red meat and dairy.

[59] **Jenny Rathbone:** Could you just tell us a bit about whether you give any support to co-operative organisations, because that might be a way of small businesses developing?

[60] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes; under the new rural development programme, there's a requirement on us to look at co-operation and collaboration. So, we'll certainly be making provision available for co-operative ventures in future. I think we've got some good examples of ways that's already worked—certainly, organic dairy suppliers, for example, coming together as a co-operative to sell their milk on to processors and so on. So, we've got some really good, strong examples where things have worked well in Wales, but there's certainly great scope under the new rural development programme for us to do that, because that's one of the Commission's aims for Europe, as well, is to increase collaboration and co-operation.

[61] **Jenny Rathbone:** What level of interest do you expect to get from people wanting to develop renewable energy in rural areas, or how much is the monopoly on distribution of the big six a barrier to this?

[62] **Rebecca Evans:** The only option, certainly under the RDP, would be to create renewable energy for on-farm use. There's no scope, under the RDP, at least, to have renewable energy on-farm that you then sell on to the grid, so it has to be for on-farm use. But that's still really important in terms of bringing the costs down for that particular farm and

making it a more sustainable business in the future, as well as a greener business for the future. So, that's where we would see, certainly, things moving in terms of farming—it would be on-farm renewables.

[63] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, how much interest is there do you think by the organisations that represent farmers in promoting this as an idea, which individuals might not have thought about?

[64] **Rebecca Evans:** I think there's huge interest, not only amongst the representative organisations, but amongst individual farmers. Last week, I was at an Agrisgôp event, which is part of our Farming Connect work, and that's where we bring together farmers with various interests, which could be co-operational dairy, for example—we saw one of those examples. But, there were several examples where farmers had got together because they were interested in what they could do in terms of having renewables on their farm. So, they come together, and they access support and advice from us, but also from the people who sell the turbines, and so on, and also they have bank managers come along to talk them about how they might finance that kind of project in future. Lots of successful projects came out of that event, so there's lots and lots of interest.

[65] **Jenny Rathbone:** Good.

[66] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Back to the RDP. William Powell?

[67] **William Powell:** Diolch, Gadeirydd. Good morning, Minister. Does the Welsh Government intend to bring forward any changes to the balance of the rural development plan to reflect outcomes of the consultation on the basic payment scheme recently?

[68] **Rebecca Evans:** We certainly reserve the right to do that. The current balance, as it stands, is £105 million for human capital interventions, £143 million for asset investments, £572 million for land-based measures, and then £95 million for LEADER and the rural community development fund. Obviously, I don't want to prejudice what might come out of the consultation, but after the consultation, we'll certainly take that opportunity to look again at the balance of the overall RDP to see whether we feel that we have the right balance for what we need to achieve for the industry. There are opportunities as well right throughout the programme to make changes in the balance annually.

[69] **William Powell:** Okay, that's very useful. Further to that, does the Welsh Government at this time intend to balance support for environmental improvements on the one hand, but also for farm business support, so that we've got an appropriate mix of support mechanisms?

[70] **Rebecca Evans:** That absolutely has to be the way forward, because without good environmental stewardship, we won't have an agriculture industry in future. I had an interesting conversation with an official recently, who said that she's never visited a farm where the farmer hasn't wanted to pass that farm down perhaps to a family member—to their daughter or to their son. So, to do that, obviously the farm needs to be handed down in good environmental condition. There's also the pressure, however, to put a meal on the table and provide shoes for your children—all those kinds of pressures as well. So, it is a case of striking that balance between making money as a business but also of looking after the environment for the future, and that's very much at the core of the agriculture strategy, which we'll be taking forward. It's about sustainable farming, so looking after farming today but also for the future.

[71] **William Powell:** What forms of support will be available through the Farming Connect scheme to actually support farm businesses, particularly those at risk of suffering a

reduction in their direct payments?

[72] **Rebecca Evans:** We'll be looking to Farming Connect to support innovative farming. We've seen some great examples already under our current Farming Connect programme, but we need farmers to think differently about the future, and to think about the opportunities that are out there to work together, and to try different things.

10:00

[73] I've seen some great examples of innovation and exploration, if you like, to see what works and what doesn't work, and to share that information as well. So, I think Farming Connect will provide those opportunities. We've got an extension to the current Farming Connect contract, so we aim for there to be a seamless transition from current Farming Connect to the next scheme. We'll be going out to tender shortly. It has to be a Europe-wide or EC-wide—or rather EU-wide—tender for that contract, but the intention is that it will be seamless because we know how important Farming Connect is to the industry.

[74] **William Powell:** Absolutely. With Farming Connect, it seems to me that the sort of skills development aspect of it is one of the most crucial areas, but one side of Farming Connect that sometimes does have adverse comment is around the quality and the appropriateness of some of the consultancy work that is done. Anecdotally, I've picked up reports of some of the consultants producing a fairly generic cut-and-paste approach around business plans and so on. What work is done to ensure that we've got an appropriate level of skills on the part of consultants who are being funded through this mechanism?

[75] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, you'll be aware that I commissioned a review of Farming Connect by Gareth Williams, who was behind our 'Working Smarter' report, and his recommendations very much reflected the kind of comments that you've raised now, because those were the kind of comments that he had heard when he'd been listening to the industry as part of that review. His recommendations were again very much about becoming more business focused, and using our consultants to help businesses plan for their business future rather than just for that particular grant. So, it's not about being narrow any more; this is about taking a serious, business-minded approach to what is the business of farming.

[76] **William Powell:** Yes. That's reassuring. If I can move briefly to the issue of Glastir, what would be your response to some stakeholder concerns that certain elements of Glastir remain over-complex and potentially waste resources?

[77] **Rebecca Evans:** I'm not sure which specific concerns those are that have been raised by stakeholders, so it would be good to have a bit more information on that, but, speaking more generally, the Wales Audit Office review of Glastir, which you'll be familiar with, said that the current scheme—or the previous scheme, now—was certainly an improvement on Tir Gofal and Tir Cynnal, and that it delivered Welsh Government and European rural development and environmental policies in a more positive way. Last time I came to committee, I gave quite an extensive response to each of the six recommendations in the report. I can tell you that we've had the report now on Glastir Advanced, which was looking at target setting and making the system less complex and so on. So, I've had that report. We're considering it at the moment, and I'll be making a formal Government response alongside a written statement shortly.

[78] **William Powell:** That's good. Chair, could I just move to a couple of issues around Phytophthora as well, because that has been much in the news in the last few days again? Could you outline, Minister, if the payment of restoration grants for areas of larch felled due to Phytophthora ramorum will actually impact upon the wider budget available for other aspects of the Glastir woodlands scheme, or whether it will be dealt with from a separate fund

because of the nature of this emergency that's befallen the industry?

[79] **Rebecca Evans:** We decided to prioritise the woodland restoration element, and that was because we had discussions with the industry and they felt that that would be the best place to start in terms of replanting and so on. So, that's why we took that approach, to give that woodland restoration a high priority. The first window for expressions of interest opened on 6 May and will close on 5 June, so I'd encourage anybody with an interest to make that known. Another window then will open in September of this year. So, in all, we're hoping to replant around 500 hectares under this plan. We've given a budget of an amount of £5 million between 2015 and 2020, and that's based on our best estimate of what the speed of the spread of the disease might be, and the work that we would need to do in response to that. So, we're hoping really in future to stop relying on large areas that are populated by one species and take a more holistic approach to our woodlands. We feel that what's been budgeted is adequate to meet the task and will allow us to move on then with woodland management.

[80] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Will these grants be available to Natural Resources Wales themselves, because they are obviously a big landowner?

[81] **Mr Slade:** There are two elements here, if I may, Minister. One is this grant under the RDP, which is aimed primarily at private landowners, and then we are working directly with NRW in terms of the resources that they need to carry out work on Welsh Government land, which they manage.

[82] **Alun Ffred Jones:** So, where will that money come from?

[83] **Mr Slade:** That's part of the ongoing annual discussions around the amount of grant in aid that goes to Natural Resources Wales.

[84] **William Powell:** One final question, Chair, if I may, on grazed woodland, because grazed woodland is obviously environmentally important but also, in terms of farming, the shelter is very important this time of year and on into the summer. What specific support will be forthcoming to encourage the protection of such grazed woodland on farms in Wales?

[85] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, Glastir woodland management, which will be launched during 2016, will provide support for the protection of grazed woodlands on-farm, and that will be available under the coming rural development programme.

[86] **William Powell:** Okay. That's good. Thank you.

[87] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Rhun, a oes gen ti rywbeth? **Alun Ffred Jones:** Rhun, do you have anything?

[88] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Yes, just going very quickly back, in the most general terms, in relation to the RDP. One, when does the new RDP become a publicly available document? Secondly, what measures can we expect to be different in this RDP, specifically to reflect the fact that the Welsh Government opted for maximum pillar transfer, and what sort of resources will be allocated to those measures?

[89] **Rebecca Evans:** We've had informal approval of our RDP, so I wrote to Members a couple of weeks back informing them of that. We hope to have formal approval of our rural development programme within the second tranche of programmes, which will be, by all accounts, by the end of this month. So, I think that's very positive. In terms of when our programmes will open, of course, some have been ongoing. Glastir, for example, and some of our LEADER schemes have been pump-primed to be able to move seamlessly over. Farming Connect has been given an extension, and so on. So, we've tried to keep things as seamless as

possible during this period. But in terms of the windows for specific grants under the sustainable production grants and so on, we hope to open those from July onwards. I'll be presenting a kind of diary, if you like, for the farming industry, but also for the interest of Members, as to when expressions of interest and application windows will open throughout the year.

[90] In terms of the 15 per cent to which you refer, all of the RDP fund will go back into rural communities, and a huge amount of it will go back direct into farm businesses in Wales. If they aspired only for the 15 per cent, then I suspect that would be rather a low aspiration because I think, certainly, rather more than that will be going back into our farm businesses.

[91] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Just one thing: since I've been in the Assembly the one scheme that's been held up as an exemplar and ticks all the right boxes as a European-wide award winner is the Pontbren scheme in mid Wales. Why hasn't that been rolled out as part of the RDP in a comprehensive manner?

[92] **Mr Slade:** We began this dialogue, didn't we, last time and got—

[93] **Alun Ffred Jones:** It's not a dialogue.

[94] **Mr Slade:** Well, it was cut short at the end, Chair. Pontbren was a LEADER scheme originally, so it grew out of the local action element of the RDP. So, that knowledge around that type of scheme within the LEADER communities is regularly shared. Some of the principles that were adopted for that scheme were also fed into the Nature Fund approach that we announced a couple of years ago, and we're going to take that further set of principles into the new rural development programme, particularly around collaboration to achieve environmental aims, working on park farm stuff, streamside corridors and so on.

[95] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I take what you say, and I accept what you say, obviously, but this is such an obvious example of something that's worked well. It's highly regarded throughout Europe, and we haven't rolled it out throughout Wales.

[96] **Mr Slade:** One of the reasons it worked so well is that everybody came together to make it happen. You can facilitate that, and you spend quite a lot of time and effort trying to facilitate that in other places. In that particular scenario or case, it came together extremely well. It's how we create an environment where that level of collaboration can happen and be successful. Sometimes, you can try and replicate the same scheme in other places and it doesn't work because you don't get the level of buy-in from the individuals and the landowners that you need.

[97] **Alun Ffred Jones:** You could try, couldn't you? Anyway, okay. Diolch yn fawr. Right, we'll move on. Food and drink, Russell George.

[98] **Russell George:** Deputy Minister, with regard to the feasibility study on establishing a dairy processing facility in Wales, can you just outline the expected timetable for this, please?

[99] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes. I took questions on this just last Tuesday. The specification for the feasibility study is being drafted by our food and agricultural policy officials at the moment, and that will be discussed and agreed at the first meeting of the Welsh dairy leadership board. We don't have a date for this meeting yet, but we expect it to be in June. Andy Richardson, who led the dairy review, is currently working on the terms of reference for that group, and I look forward to receiving those.

[100] **Russell George:** Thank you. With regard to the food strategy, the Welsh

Government, or your predecessor, published the food and drink action plan last year, with 48 actions attached to it. Now, against each action, there's a column that says 'Milestones...2014-16'. Is that to be completed in that time frame? Is that 1 January 2016 or the end of 2016?

[101] **Rebecca Evans:** During 2016.

[102] **Russell George:** During 2016. Okay. Are there, currently, any action points under that column that you haven't yet met on the target, as set in the milestones section?

[103] **Rebecca Evans:** I don't believe so, because the plan itself is very young and it's a plan to take us to 2020, increasing the food and drink sector by 30 per cent, so to a £7 billion sector, and that is a priority sector for the Welsh Government. Many of those actions you'll see in the plan will be driven by the board, which will, hopefully, as I say, be meeting for the first time—sorry, by the board that has met several times already now. Perhaps Andrew will give us an update on what they've discussed. But, I certainly attended the first meeting of the food and drink industry board and was quite blown away, really, by the kind of people who we've managed to bring in. You know, they're there because they're passionate about the food and drink industry in Wales. They're successful businesspeople themselves, so they're leading lights who can inspire and drive the industry forward from within. So, many of those actions are for the board, but there are also actions you'll see in there—

[104] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Can I just intervene there? When did you announce the membership of the board?

[105] **Rebecca Evans:** I wrote to Members I think in March or—

[106] **Mr Slade:** It was February time—the shadow board.

[107] **Alun Ffred Jones:** The shadow board, so—

[108] **Rebecca Evans:** And we've had interviews yesterday and the day before to increase the scope of that board, because—

[109] **Russell George:** So, the board's not fully established yet.

[110] **Rebecca Evans:** The board's certainly up and running and has been working under the chairmanship of Robin Jones of the Village Bakery. As I say, I've attended myself, but we felt that it was important to increase representation on that board and to increase the expertise on it.

[111] **Alun Ffred Jones:** But the action plan was announced in 2012.

[112] **Mr Slade:** In June of last year.

[113] **Alun Ffred Jones:** June of last year—

[114] **Mr Slade:** The action plan, yes.

[115] **Russell George:** If it helps, Chair. The action plan here says that the board is to be fully established in 2014, and the plan was announced last June, wasn't it? So, I think that's the confusion. There's a shadow board, but, yet, the plan is saying that the board is to be fully established by 2014. It's just to understand where we're at in that process.

[116] **Rebecca Evans:** I think it was originally planned that the board would be the board,

but then when we looked at the make-up of the board, we weren't satisfied, really, that it was representative enough of, necessarily, the industry, but also of Wales in terms of being underrepresented by specific groups. So, we took action to invite further applications to join the board to increase it. But, as I say, the board has been meeting and they've certainly been taking ownership of the plan. As I was saying, the plan has actions for the board, but also actions for the Food Standards Agency, for universities and colleges.

[117] **Alun Ffred Jones:** But if this is a strategy for 2014 to 2020, you'd have expected, surely, a board, which is a crucial part of that strategy and action plan, to have been in place for 2014.

[118] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, you have to go through the public appointments process to find what you require from the board and so on. But, as I say, the board has been up and running in a shadow form. I've attended meetings. Did you want to update on the kind of work the board has been doing?

[119] **Mr Slade:** I can tell you that the shadow board is very definitely up and running and that, in addition to having an overall monitoring role to look at the delivery of the action plan, they are assisting us in identifying priority areas for attention—so, within the plan, what gets the greatest prominence earliest. The three areas that they have picked up on and got going with straight away are around: the identity of Welsh food and drink and how that is packaged and what that means in terms of quality assurance; skills and careers in the food and drink industry—there's a massive opportunity in our largest manufacturing sector across the UK and great opportunities for school leavers coming into the industry, so there's a lot of work around that; and then, thirdly, around public procurement.

10:15

[120] **Russell George:** So, just to be clear—and I'm sorry to labour the point—it's a shadow board at the moment. When do you expect it to be a fully established board?

[121] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, as I say, we had the interviews for additional members yesterday and the day before, so once we've considered the interviews and made a decision, an announcement will be made very shortly.

[122] **Russell George:** And, when do you expect that to be by?

[123] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, in the coming weeks.

[124] **Russell George:** Right, okay. Thank you.

[125] Are there any other milestone action points that are to be completed by the middle of 2016 that you are concerned about and that you may not meet in that time frame?

[126] **Rebecca Evans:** No, I'm not concerned. I have to say, we are making some really good progress on our food and drink action plan. Building the food and drink Wales identity—we've taken some big steps to do that. We're starting to become known and have an identity of our own. We've launched the Food and Drink Wales website, which I hope Members will have had a chance to look at. It's certainly very impressive, inspirational and interesting for people who are thinking of procuring from our Welsh food businesses, but also I think it would have an international appeal. It's also useful for people involved in the industry themselves, because it provides a gateway to Welsh Government support and the work we're doing through our innovation centres, and so on. So, it pulls together everything as a one-stop shop for the industry.

[127] **Russell George:** Can I just ask, do you mind? Is there any particular milestone action points that you think you may not meet, or that you're struggling to meet, by the deadline of the middle of next year?

[128] **Rebecca Evans:** Is there something particular on your mind?

[129] **Russell George:** No, there's not. I'm asking you whether there is something particular that you think you might not meet by the milestone date set. If there's not, then that's fine.

[130] **Rebecca Evans:** I don't have concerns at the moment, but I'm happy to continue updating you on the good work and progress that we've made.

[131] **Russell George:** What I was asking about is, I understand that you're updating us on the good work—the points that are being met—but are there any points at all in the action plan that you want to make the committee aware that you are, perhaps, struggling to achieve by the middle of 2016?

[132] **Rebecca Evans:** I think it would be helpful, perhaps, if we do an annual report back to Assembly Members—either a written report or a statement—so that you'd have the opportunity to explore those issues, if that's helpful.

[133] **Russell George:** Yes, that would be useful.

[134] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I think the general point here is that this was announced by a previous Deputy Minister in 2012 and this was the new approach—whatever that may be—and we're now in the middle of 2015 and it seems to me that you're still struggling to articulate exactly the direction and the actions that have been taken. You've got a shadow board that is soon to become a full board. I mean, it does sound a bit—. We are, after all, in the last year of the present Government. This was announced back at the beginning of 2012. Does it sound to you as though this progress has been adequate?

[135] **Rebecca Evans:** It does, because, I mean, if you read the 48 actions in the plan, we are making significant progress on many of them. For example, cementing our links and dialogue with the Wales retail consortium; officials are now meeting regularly with them and I'm meeting with them shortly to discuss issues of interest to our food and drink business. We've got ongoing work on the rural development plan and food sector as being a particular action in the plan and we're addressing that by ensuring that we're refocusing our supply chains' efficiency grants within our next offer for the RDP to reflect that. We've got business growth and market development as a key sector within that report and I recently announced £2.5 million to help our Welsh food and drink businesses to attend a series of international exhibitions over the coming months and years. So, we're making significant progress. The board, obviously, will play a key part in driving things forward, but we're not slowing down because the board is only in shadow form at the moment; we're certainly making progress.

[136] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Jenny and then William.

[137] **Jenny Rathbone:** Once you've finalised the appointments based on the interviews that you did in the last couple of days, are you satisfied that you will have adequate representation from horticulture? I see you've got one person from Capestone Organic, which I assume is around horticulture.

[138] **Mr Slade:** It's poultry, actually.

[139] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, fine.

[140] **Mr Slade:** But Puffin Produce Ltd is potatoes and vegetables.

[141] **Jenny Rathbone:** Puffin Produce. Okay.

[142] **Rebecca Evans:** They're already represented on the shadow board.

[143] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, but will there be any strengthening of the voice of fruit and veg?

[144] **Rebecca Evans:** I don't want to pre-empt—

[145] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, I appreciate that. I'm not suggesting you're going to announce, but is that one of the things that you thought were underrepresented when you went out for further applications?

[146] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, there were several sectors that were underrepresented, but then, also, several groups—for example, women and so on—were underrepresented on the board as well. One thing that we're trying to avoid, really, is an individual being the voice of, say, dairy on that board, because we expect a lot more of the members of the board than that. We want them to take, you know, a holistic view of the food and drink industry. Just because you're in dairy doesn't mean that what you're doing won't work across, perhaps, in beer, or in some other kind of sector as well. So, it's about the skills much more broadly than representing the voice or being the voice of a sector on the board.

[147] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you.

[148] **Alun Ffred Jones:** William Powell **Alun Ffred Jones:** William Powell and then ac wedyn Mohammad Asghar. Mohammad Asghar.

[149] **William Powell:** Thank you, Chair. I was one of, I think, possibly, few members of the committee who was actually at the launch of the action plan last summer, and there was a big emphasis, on that occasion, on good practice both from Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. I just would like to check with you that we are maintaining contacts with those organisations that were promoted at that time, as very much, sort of, examples of good practice, and whether there's a relationship between the shadow board now established and their opposite numbers, both in Scotland and the Republic.

[150] **Mr Slade:** 'Yes' is the short answer, and one of the other early elements that the board wanted to look into and consider was the experience of other parts of the UK, but also other parts of Europe that are doing the development of their food and drink sector sustainably well. So, there's a lot of work going into learning from others and sharing ideas. We are not necessarily competing with other parts of the UK for a lot of this stuff. There's a growing food market, as you know, across the world, and there's a lot that we can learn from each other in moving forward.

[151] **William Powell:** That's reassuring; thank you.

[152] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mohammad Asghar.

[153] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Chair. It's wonderful to hear from you, Deputy Minister, that you've put over £2 million into promoting our Welsh food and drink abroad. So, have you made any strategy, whether its European, far east, middle east or globally? You know, what is your strategy to promote, especially, our Welsh lamb, which is one of the best meats in the world, and Welsh water, even? If you promote Welsh water alone, I think that's

the best one to promote around the globe. So, what is your strategy? Either you are emphasising very strongly towards Europe or globally.

[154] **Rebecca Evans:** We're developing key markets for different produce in many ways. For example, you mentioned Welsh lamb. We're keen to open up the market in Norway for Welsh lamb, because we know that the Norwegians—. This is part of the discussions, perhaps, that we would have regarding membership of the European Union, of course, because while not a member of the European Union, Norway has to negotiate tariffs, quotas and so on. So, we've been in dialogue with the ministry of agriculture in Norway with the support of Hybu Cig Cymru to try and open up the market further, because the Norwegians can't produce the kind of lamb and the amounts that they need, so we feel that we're ideal partners for them, really, in order to fill that gap in their market. They are discerning customers and they like top-quality produce. So, we're working very much to open that up. Work is continuing to reopen the market for Welsh lamb and beef in the USA; again, it's because we have a premium product and we feel that our products can meet the exacting specifications of really high-end restaurants over in the USA as well. For our light lambs, we're looking at what more we can do in the Mediterranean, because those lambs particularly meet the tastes of people in the Mediterranean and so on. So, we are taking a very focused look at what we can do.

[155] We've also had some discussions with the Government in Dubai, looking at what we could do for organics, because organics are particularly an emerging and growing market there. So, we're very focused in where we put our efforts, because, clearly, it's a big world market, but we need to know where our products will fit, and we need to have good relations with the Governments and so on to help us open those markets.

[156] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Russell George a **Alun Ffred Jones:** Russell George and Julie Morgan.
Julie Morgan.

[157] **Russell George:** I'm pleased to hear about that market with Norway. Can you just identify which markets around the world you are focusing on? So, you've mentioned Norway and the middle east—are there any other particular markets as well?

[158] **Rebecca Evans:** The middle east, and the far east as well. We're looking at what more we can do in Europe to sell to the European market as well, so those are our key sectors at the moment.

[159] **Russell George:** Is that something that you'll be looking at further—identifying particular markets around the world, further markets?

[160] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes, lots of work has already been—. This is an ongoing piece of work that's been going on for some years now.

[161] **Russell George:** Can I ask also about organics, which you mentioned as well? There has been some criticism that the Welsh Government isn't sufficiently promoting or marketing organics as well. Is that a fair comment, or can you comment on that?

[162] **Rebecca Evans:** I think that growth in organics should follow the market rather than being led by Government and led by subsidies, if you like. We've seen in the past what happens: if we offer large grants for organics, lots of people come in because they want the grant funding, and when that grant funding dries up, people leave the sector. So, it has to be a business decision for that individual business as to whether they think organics is right for them.

[163] **Russell George:** So what can the Welsh Government do to support, then? I

understand the market element, but what can the Welsh Government do to support the industry?

[164] **Rebecca Evans:** We've provided good support through our Glastir Organic scheme. I think that's probably the most significant thing that we can do for that.

[165] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Julie Morgan.

[166] **Julie Morgan:** I was going to ask about organics as well. For example, I understand that there used to be an organic action plan within the Welsh Government, I think up to 2010. There's no organic action plan at the moment, is there?

[167] **Rebecca Evans:** There's not a specific action plan, but there's no reason why organics shouldn't be benefitting from our food and drink action plan, which is much wider, and from the work that we're doing on our agriculture strategy to drive forward the whole industry. But again, really, this has to be market-led and business-led rather than a result of subsidy, I think.

[168] **Julie Morgan:** So you don't see there's a role for the Welsh Government in taking specific action on organics; you see it as part of the wider strategy.

[169] **Rebecca Evans:** It is part of the wider strategy. Beyond the support that we give through Glastir Organic, which is quite substantial, I think that's the most important part of our work there. We have an ongoing dialogue, obviously, with the organic sector, and I know that there's research and things that we also support. The support is wide ranging, but in terms of driving forward the business, that would have to be market-led.

[170] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you.

[171] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Joyce Watson.

[172] **Joyce Watson:** I want to explore the idea—and you've talked, Minister, at length about where we're focusing the markets, so let's take lamb. Most people who eat lamb, or will eat beef, will have a condiment of some sort that will go with it as well as the veg that might be on the plate. So I'm talking about the whole plate of food as opposed to a particular part of it. How are you joining that up? So, if you are promoting, let's say, Welsh lamb, are you also trying to promote the condiments that might be produced here, either organically or not, to go with that, so that you get a double whammy, if you like, for exploring the potential of markets for those people who are producing foods, whatever those foods might be?

[173] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes, we had a really good example of that recently out in the seafood expo in Brussels. That was the biggest seafood expo in the world, and we supported eight of our producers to attend that. Alongside that, we had Halen Môn salt, which is Anglesey sea salt, and that's achieved protected food name status as well, so we were showing that we've got the seafood, and then you can serve it with your Halen Môn salt, and so on. These businesses, because they spend time together at these expos and things, they develop those links, so they're constantly promoting one another and seeing how they could work together to do more innovative products that will meet that need for the whole meal, if you like. We've also recently launched our food tourism action plan as well, and that's about promoting the whole plate, if you like, and seeing what's on the menu. It's a challenge for Government, for the industry, but also for our hospitality industry and our tourism industry, to use what's on their doorstep and to promote that as part of the whole tourism offer that we have in Wales.

[174] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I'd like to move on now to TB. Joyce, would you like to lead us

off on this one?

[175] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. I'd like to ask, Minister, what discussions the Welsh Government has had, particularly with the UK Government, about the impact on Wales of the UK's decision not to require annual animal testing.

[176] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, I've written to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Secretary of State, Liz Truss, on several occasions on this particular issue, because there is a concern for me that untested cattle from England's low-risk areas are coming into Wales. In some cases, there's a four-year testing regime, so there is potentially the chance that cattle are coming into Wales that have never been tested for TB, and that's a concern to me, but I've unfortunately been unable to get any movement on the part of the UK Government on that. What we can do is encourage our farmers to undertake risk-based trading or informed trading, and that's to look at the history of the herd and look at the testing of the cattle that they're keen to buy. So, we're encouraging that and we're doing that through information that we're providing at markets. We've recently announced grants for livestock markets, so that they can buy boards to put up that information, to make the information about the cattle that much easier for farmers to see. It's really for farmers as well to say, 'I don't want to buy this livestock until it's been pre-movement tested', as well; they're completely within their rights to do that. Did you want to add anything?

[177] **Professor Glossop:** Well, that's perfectly true—it's buyer beware, really, and people should be asking the right questions. We launched a booklet at the weekend to provide farmers with information on the kind of disease questions they should be asking when they purchase animals, but of course the testing frequency for cattle in England is a matter for DEFRA, so what we can do is inform our farmers and consider what we can do to work together to minimise the risk of disease coming in; what we can't do is impose what we would like to see happen in England.

[178] **Joyce Watson:** When we have them—and, unfortunately there are breakdowns—do we explore this as a possibility? I'm assuming that that is the case. So, are there any records that are kept that could point to the need, and maybe help convince DEFRA that this is a good policy so there can be some harmonisation?

[179] **Rebecca Evans:** One recent case in point would be a sale up in Cumbria, whereby cattle were bought that were positive for TB, and they were sent right across Britain, and we did have some of our farmers affected in Wales as well. So, that's an example of where that system fell down in England to the detriment of our farmers here in Wales. We've got a TB epidemiologist who's working on several projects, and one of them is understanding the disease picture in Wales. So, it will, shortly, I think, be coming to the point whereby we're able to see the disease picture, because there are so many different strains of TB, it's coming to the point where we can see where TB has come from and where the movement has been of the disease across Wales. Would you like to add something?

[180] **Professor Glossop:** Yes, I would. You're right, we have just over 500 farms in Wales right now that are down with TB, and for each and every breakdown, there is a detailed epidemiological investigation to try and understand the movements of animals onto that farm. We test the neighbouring herds, and we also look at other sources of infection. So, that's for every single breakdown. Sometimes, it's not clear-cut, but, where we can, and in every case in fact, we do a tracing for any animals that might have moved.

[181] To put this into perspective, we did run a check on the number of cattle that moved into Wales from the high-risk area in England and then the area that DEFRA's describing as low risk, which would be in the four-year testing area. For the year ending April 2014, there were just over 47,000 movements of cattle from the high-risk area, which would've required

pre-movement testing, and 3,500 movements of cattle—that's individual cattle—from the low-risk area, which would not have necessarily required pre-movement testing. So, I think that does put this into perspective, but the source of every breakdown is really important so that we can learn how to manage the risks for the future.

[182] **Alun Ffred Jones:** But not all breakdowns can be accounted for by movements of cattle.

[183] **Professor Glossop:** Certainly not, no, and, of course, if it's not attributable to a movement of an animal and if the neighbouring herds are testing negative, then it's actually more difficult to work out the source. But, each year, we publish our epidemiology report, and each year, we're therefore providing information on where we believe the sources of infection are.

[184] **Alun Ffred Jones:** William Powell.

[185] **William Powell:** Thank you, Chair. Could you give us just a brief update on the latest developments in terms of TB testing, in terms of the consortium approach, and any changes that either have been brought in recently or are pending?

[186] **Rebecca Evans:** We now have two consortia working, one in the north and one in the south, and I was pleased that they've been set up. They've allowed local vets to continue working, and that's not necessarily been the case elsewhere, where they've had to tender for these contracts. So, local vets are still very much at the heart of our efforts to tackle TB in Wales. We've made it very clear to the vets that their role isn't just about doing the tests—it's about having important conversations with the farmer when they're on farm about biosecurity and what else can be done on their farm and elsewhere to try and stop the spread of TB, and so on. Did you want to add something about that work?

[187] **Professor Glossop:** Yes, certainly. So, the contracts to the two consortia—in the south, it's called Iechyd Da, and in the north it's under the banner of Menter a Busnes—were awarded to take effect from 1 April. TB testing work packages are provided three months in advance, so the actual first test, which will start happening under the new contractual arrangements, will be on 1 July. So, this three-month transition period is all about working with both consortia, working with the individual private vets—actually making sure that they've gone through the required training; we have new training available for them—and making sure, actually, that those two consortia are working well together because, between them, they're covering the whole of Wales and they're very much now partners of the TB eradication programme. So, we're asking questions of them as to how we can continue to engage with them. As the Deputy Minister points out, they're not just technicians providing a TB testing service; they need to be very much on board with the eradication programme.

[188] **William Powell:** And how are these changes going to be communicated to the farming community?

[189] **Professor Glossop:** The changes have been communicated already through our three regional eradication delivery boards and through direct contact with farms. And, of course, the private vets are in direct contact with their farmers to be setting up the testing—

[190] **William Powell:** So that link is maintained.

[191] **Professor Glossop:** Yes, and that's what was so important from the start, as I know you would agree.

[192] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely.

[193] **Rebecca Evans:** I think it's worth recognising as well that industry representatives and the British Veterinary Association have welcomed the appointment of our partners here in Wales.

[194] **William Powell:** Thank you very much indeed for that.

[195] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Joyce, do you want to come in?

[196] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. Can I ask about monitoring? There are two schemes going on: one was the cull in parts of England and whether you're going to look at that; of course, the other scheme is our own scheme for dealing with badgers in Pembrokeshire and how that scheme has had any effect. So, in terms of reviewing those two, are you going to do that and when would we see the outcome of that review?

[197] **Rebecca Evans:** Obviously, badger culling in England is a matter for DEFRA Ministers. Obviously, my officials keep a close watch on what's happening, not only over the border, but also elsewhere in the world where bTB is a problem. We look at what's happening in various countries, which are taking various approaches and, equally, other countries are looking to see what we're doing as well. We hosted a very successful conference on the subject of bovine TB in Cardiff, and there was a lot of interest in what we're doing in terms of vaccinating badgers. That's a five-year programme and we're just entering the fourth year of that five-year programme. The experts behind the advice, which led to the programme in the first place, made it clear that we wouldn't expect to see the results of that until the end of the fifth year. That's for various reasons—developing herd immunity and the lifespan of infected badgers, and so on.

[198] **Joyce Watson:** Okay, thank you.

[199] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Obviously, the Government has set its mind against the culling. Is there any anecdotal evidence that unofficial culling is taking place?

[200] **Rebecca Evans:** I would certainly hope that that would not be the case. Obviously—

[201] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I'm not saying whether you're hoping; I'm asking—

[202] **Rebecca Evans:** I'm answering.

[203] **Alun Ffred Jones:** —is there any anecdotal evidence that it is happening.

[204] **Rebecca Evans:** I haven't received any evidence and, obviously, if it were to be happening, it would be a matter for the police because badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

[205] **Professor Glossop:** I might add, if I may, that the found dead badger survey that we're carrying out across the whole of Wales started last November. Obviously, every badger is submitted to a detailed post-mortem examination, so if, at any point, we found any evidence of illegal activity through that route, then that would provide us with some evidence and, so far, we've seen nothing.

[206] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Good. Julie Morgan, you want to come in on a different issue.

[207] **Julie Morgan:** Yes, thank you. I wanted to ask about dogs, and, in particular, I wondered, Minister, if you could tell us about the progress of the special group that you've set up, led by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Could you tell us what

progress has been made and what you hope will be achieved by that group?

[208] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes. We've asked the RSPCA to undertake a piece of work for us on responsible dog ownership and we've asked them to report to us by the autumn on that piece of work. The review will take into account the provisions that are already there under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, but they will then review that and make recommendations as to what more we can do in Wales, including enforcement, with a view to promoting the welfare provisions for dogs. They'll be taking into account recent literature, which includes the 'Rapid Review: deaths of children from dog bites/strikes' report, which was undertaken by Public Health Wales last year, and it will encompass both the physical and the mental aspects associated with keeping dogs as pets. The group is taking written evidence at the moment from interested parties and they're organising a series of round table meetings and discussions with interested parties, such as the Communication Workers Union and so on, and those will take place over the course of the summer.

[209] **Julie Morgan:** I'm pleased you mentioned the Communication Workers Union because, certainly, they've done a huge amount of work because their members are the ones who have suffered most, I think, from dog bites, basically. So, will they be playing a major role in this inquiry?

[210] **Rebecca Evans:** Oh, absolutely. As you say, they have led the way on this particular issue for many years now. So, we certainly would hope to make the very best of that information, expertise and their views and ideas on what more could be done. So, they're key partners, as are organisations such as the Dogs Trust and others with an interest.

[211] **Julie Morgan:** And in terms of the effectiveness of the provisions brought in by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, to date, have you been able to review how that's working?

[212] **Rebecca Evans:** I think it's too early to say how that is working, but one of the things that we've asked the RSPCA to look at would be to review the existing legislation, and the provisions within the existing legislation, to ensure that they think it's fit for purpose, or whether there's more that we could be doing in Wales.

[213] **Julie Morgan:** We do still hear of many dog attacks. There was one in Cardiff, as you know, where the woman unfortunately died. So, I think it's crucial that we keep a close eye on how that is working.

[214] **Rebecca Evans:** Absolutely.

[215] **Julie Morgan:** So, you are monitoring that.

[216] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes.

[217] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you.

[218] **Alun Ffred Jones:** William Powell on new entrants.

[219] **William Powell:** Thank you, Chair. In recent evidence to the committee, representatives of the young farmers movement of Wales, Ceri Davies and Carys Vaughan, from their rural affairs committee, both expressed some concern about the pace of the development of the joint opportunities platform. I wonder whether you could give us an update, Minister, as to how that's developing.

[220] **Rebecca Evans:** Officials are currently working with the industry through our young

entrants support scheme stakeholder group, and other partners, to scope out the development of appropriate mechanisms for supporting young farmers and new entrants. That's going to be ongoing over the summer months. It's worth saying that the joint opportunities platform will be for Government to support and enable, but it will certainly be for the industry itself to take forward. We've spoken previously about some of the good share farming visits that I've undertaken; quite inspirational, exciting projects, and when I've met with farmers and asked what more they think that Government could do to support share farming, and to enable share farming, actually they were saying, 'Well, perhaps this one is one for the industry themselves' because they really know the individuals involved; they know who would match well and so on. But there's also things I think that we can do in terms of providing really sound advice as to what people should consider before entering into a share farming agreement and what kind of advice, information and support they should be seeking out in order to make a decision that's right for them now, but will also be right in the future, in the long term as well.

[221] **William Powell:** That's good. And has the Welsh Government, as yet, had any discussions with the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences about the possibility of Pwllpeiran farm being used as a base for work experience opportunities for young farmers, because that, again, was an issue that came up in our recent scrutiny session, that there are sometimes difficulties in getting suitable placements for farmers, young women and men who want to take that on as a career and have limited opportunity?

10:45

[222] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes. I had the pleasure of launching a new scheme at Pwllpeiran during the winter fair and that's the opportunity to develop two new entrants partnerships at Pwllpeiran and that's on their upland research platform. So, that's going to provide an opportunity for two young people under the age of 40 to develop their farm businesses, but also with some really, really serious innovation and innovative research support behind them as well. So, we're not just expecting those young people to take the opportunity to develop and get a career in farming, we're actually asking them to do more than that and to undertake some research that's really going to be valuable to the industry as a whole and use the opportunities that the IBERS presents then to disseminate their findings to the industry. So, that's one example where we're using—. We're tying up really: we're trying to get young people into farming, but also, on the other hand, are transferring knowledge within the industry and improving the research that we do and so on. So, I think it's an innovative approach and, if it's successful—because, as I say, it was only launched back in the winter fair—it could be a model that we could look to develop further.

[223] **William Powell:** Also, on the first morning of the winter fair, I was present when you took time out to be involved with the young farmers in 'The Wales We Want' consultation, when they were speaking, not just about agriculture and immediate farming matters, but also about their wider aspirations. An issue that came up in our recent scrutiny with the young farmers again was the issue of a feedback panel and they were keen to know when such a panel would be established so that there could be ongoing dialogue between the young farmers of Wales and Welsh Government. I wondered whether you have got any news or any thoughts on when that could come forward.

[224] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes. Officials are working with the industry on that at the moment. We need to understand what the membership of that panel would be. I had a really successful meeting with the Young Farmers Wales just earlier this week, because, as you know, the Welsh Government is supporting them through their Enabling Change Programme. There was a challenge there for the YFC in order to help them develop their vision and to help them understand how we can work more closely together than we have done before. So, I think that we're in a really good place with young farmers now because they understand what the Welsh Government's vision is for the industry and how it correlates very much with what they're

trying to achieve. I think there are exciting opportunities for partnership in the future beyond what they're already doing because I have to pay tribute to the work that they do on farm safety, and our other advisory groups as well. But I think that this is just the start of what could be really positive.

[225] **William Powell:** Would it be realistic to expect maybe some progress on that between now and the Royal Welsh Show?

[226] **Rebecca Evans:** I would hope so. Could I write to you, Chair, with a more firm date as to—

[227] **Ms Slade:** I was just going to say that it's very much bound up in where we go with the agriculture strategic framework and part of the mechanism by which we can provide feedback through that. So, timing is linked.

[228] **William Powell:** Certainly I think that, if possible, it would be useful if some members of the young farmers could have the opportunity to meet Phil Hogan when he comes to the Royal Welsh, I believe, on the Monday of the show. If that could be facilitated, I think that would be a useful dialogue for both parties.

[229] **Rebecca Evans:** Thank you for that. We're just putting together a programme at the moment. I'm really pleased that he'll be spending so much time with us at the Royal Welsh as well. He'll also be taking time out to visit some of our Welsh farms as well so that our farmers can demonstrate to him some of their concerns and interest on the ground as well in terms of CAP simplification, for example, and greening measures and what that actually means on a Welsh farm. So, it's a great opportunity.

[230] **William Powell:** That's very positive news. Good.

[231] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Okay. Joyce Watson on GMOs.

[232] **Joyce Watson:** On genetically modified organisms, on 22 April this year, the European Commission did table proposals to reform the authorisation process for GM food and feed. I want to ask, Deputy Minister, whether the Welsh Government is content that you have sufficient power under the new proposals to introduce a ban in relation to the use of GM food and feed in Wales even if the UK Government didn't actually support such action.

[233] **Rebecca Evans:** GM crops are within my portfolio, but GM food and feed are in the portfolio of the Deputy Minister for Health, so perhaps the committee could raise that particular question with him.

[234] The Food Standards Agency, actually, is the competent authority in the UK in terms of GM food and feed and they report to the National Assembly for Wales via Vaughan Gething, the Deputy Minister. So, he would be the appropriate person to speak to on those issues.

[235] **Joyce Watson:** Okay, so—

[236] **Alun Ffred Jones:** So, are we talking about GM food and feed for animals?

[237] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, I'm talking about GM food, or feed in that. There is currently GM food and feed being used by farmers in Wales to feed their animals. So, whose portfolio would that fall under? Because it's obviously in the food chain.

[238] **Rebecca Evans:** I think that falls with Vaughan Gething, food and feed both. The

crops are mine, but, when they become food, then that's Vaughan Gething.

[239] **Mr Slade:** And that's the wider food chain, as well.

[240] **Alun Ffred Jones:** And feed?

[241] **Mr Slade:** Concerns about feedstock would also be picked up by FSA in the first instance.

[242] **Joyce Watson:** By health? So, we need to refer those questions to health.

[243] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Do you talk with health about these matters?

[244] **Rebecca Evans:** We have very good relationships with Vaughan Gething. Whenever he has any information from the FSA, or papers from the FSA, briefings, updates, I'm always copied into those, just as a matter of interest. But, in terms of raising issues, I would raise it with him.

[245] **Alun Ffred Jones:** But do you have concerns about GM feed in the food chain as part of your responsibilities? Do you have any concerns?

[246] **Rebecca Evans:** My understanding is that there are extremely strict rules and regulations surrounding the use of GM feed, and the FSA have not raised any particular concerns, and, obviously, the FSA are the experts and the competent authority on that.

[247] **Joyce Watson:** Can I ask another question, then? Because we've got this split, okay, so we'll have to work our way through that. In terms of labelling, because that's really what it all comes down to, if people want to make a choice between whether they're eating genetically modified food or not, it all comes down to the labelling, and I'm sure that it'll come as a surprise to a few people that they would be eating perhaps lamb, beef or whatever here, or drinking the milk, where the animals could have been fed genetically modified maize or soya beans. How do people know? Where will they find this information?

[248] **Rebecca Evans:** Again, I'm afraid that I should have added that labelling, alongside food and feed, is the responsibility of the FSA, reporting to the National Assembly for Wales through Vaughan Gething.

[249] **Mr Slade:** I think the labelling was part of the Commission package of proposals around this that was published at the end of last month. So, it will be an issue that will be increasingly debated now at European level.

[250] **Joyce Watson:** Absolutely.

[251] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Iawn. Rhun, a wyt ti eisiau gofyn cwestiwn am y panel cynghori amaethyddiaeth? **Alun Ffred Jones:** Okay. Rhun, did you want to come in on the agricultural advisory panel?

[252] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Nac ydw. **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** No.

[253] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Diolch yn fawr. **Alun Ffred Jones:** Thank you.

[254] Mick, sorry, it was you.

[255] **Mick Antoniw:** I really want to ask two things with regard to—since the new legislation came in—the agricultural advisory panel, and, of course, there's been a

consultation and so on. What stage are we at with that?

[256] **Rebecca Evans:** The public consultation on the final proposals regarding the make-up, operation and membership of the panel opened on 27 March, and it will close on 19 June. So, we expect that the Order for that would be made in the autumn. It's currently proposed that the independent members of the panel will be selected via the public appointment process, and that means that, when all that is taken into account, it would be early 2016 when the panel would be able to be set up.

[257] **Mick Antoniw:** Why such a delay? If the consultation is completed in June, the appointments process is not really massively onerous, why isn't it possible for that to be in for the committee to be up and running by the autumn?

[258] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, because of the sensitivity of this particular proposal and the level of interest in it, it's important that we take time to really consider all of the recommendations and all of the responses that come through the consultation, and that would be over a period of many weeks. Probably, we'd have to take a couple of months, really, to give those some serious consideration. It's possible that people might come up with other ideas as to how the panel should be formatted, and so we'd have to give each of those due consideration as well. So, in order to do that, that would take some time, and then, a public appointments process is also a fairly lengthy process as well. So, by the time it's all added up, it would be very early 2016 before that could happen.

[259] **Mick Antoniw:** Can I ask you, then, about the powers under the Act for the establishment of an interim Order in respect of agricultural wages? We're quite some time on and the wages of rural agricultural workers have, de facto, reduced significantly. What is the Welsh Government's position in respect of the need for an interim Order? I know it's consulting on it, but does the Welsh Government have a view itself that it is desirable, subject to consultation, that there should be an interim Order?

[260] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, as you say, there's a consultation taking place at the moment, and that closes on 11 May—or it closed on 11 May, I should say. The responses to that again will need to be analysed. I think that it's important to keep an open mind when you approach a consultation. We are consulting at the moment on whether or not to introduce that Order. So, it's important to keep an open mind until we've had an opportunity to analyse and look at all of those consultation responses, in terms of whether or not to make the Order. But you were right to point to point out that it was 2012 when agriculture workers had a pay review. If an interim Order were to be introduced, the aim would be to have it in place by the autumn, coinciding with the date of the increase in the minimum wage. The aim would be to do that in order to keep it as simple as possible, both for farmers who are paying employers but also for employees.

[261] **Mick Antoniw:** So, just to clarify that: subject, of course, to the consultation and its process, if the conclusion of that is that there should be an interim Order, the objective would be to get that interim Order made as early as possible in the post-summer Assembly.

[262] **Rebecca Evans:** That's correct.

[263] **Mick Antoniw:** Okay; thank you.

[264] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Jenny Rathbone.

[265] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just wanted to pick up on the new organic regulations that have been proposed by Brussels, particularly in terms of the proposals to ban mixed farming, which obviously makes it much more difficult for people wanting to convert gradually. I

wondered if you've had any discussions on that in your meetings across the UK-wide area.

[266] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes. DEFRA are again leading those discussions, but I always take the opportunity at the agriculture council meetings to put Wales's case forward. Two of the most important things from our perspective were that part-farm provision was allowed—so, you could have an organic farm or have an organic dairy enterprise on the farm at the same time as having a non-organic beef herd, for example. That you could have mixed farming was really important to us. I think that we've made some progress in terms of that because a compromise text is being drawn up at European level to reflect concerns such as that. So, that, I think, is a good news story. And we've also had some reassurances, I think, that you could leave Glastir Organic without penalty as well. That was something that was important to Welsh Government as well. We're keen to see the sector simplified and to encourage growth and so on in that sector. I think that if we continue the ongoing negotiations, that would be a positive outcome.

[267] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. Looking at it in the wider context, the overuse of pesticides has suddenly become a major issue in the United States because of the decimation of the bee population. I just wondered if you were looking at how we could encourage farmers to reduce or not use pesticides in order to protect the rest of the wildlife population.

[268] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, we do have a plan for bees that comes under the Minister for Natural Resources. But I think that, with pesticides, it is important to take a very balanced approach to it: understanding the need to grow food in a way in which we can protect the crops, but, equally, not to put too much of a burden on the natural environment as well. So, it is about striking a balance. I met with representatives of the industry on this specific point. I do think that there's an understanding that that has to be the approach—you know, a reasonable approach where we protect crops and are able to grow food, but equally not going further than we have to.

[269] **Jenny Rathbone:** I can see the need for a balanced approach, but do you see a shift in the industry towards reducing the use of pesticides, given the impact on water quality and all sorts of other things?

11:00

[270] **Mr Slade:** Yes, because as you say, there are environmental regulation pressures that are coming, in addition to the cost saving that can be achieved if you manage to use less input in the production of your crops or your meat or milk from dairy production.

[271] The RDP is looking very much, as the Deputy Minister was saying earlier, at a more balanced and holistic view of how we secure sustainability on farms. That includes economic performance, but it's also how do we use our natural resources and how do we do this in a way that allows the business to continue. A lot of work is going into that. We're also working pretty closely with some of the research institutions around impact on pollinators, not just bees, but a number of other insects. The pattern of behaviour is different across the different insects. I was at Harper Adams University recently, at their entomology department, talking about this. There's a lot of work going on to understand what's happening and where particular types of pesticide reduction, as the Minister was saying, can assist, and where else it may actually be entirely appropriate, done proportionately.

[272] **Alun Ffred Jones:** We're coming to the end of the session—just one last question. Could you confirm how many of the 74 'Working Smarter' recommendations will be completed by July 2015 as set out by the Government?

[273] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes. We're making very good progress on the 'Working Smarter'

recommendations. Before I say any more, it's important to remember that 'Working Smarter' is about much more than those recommendations. It's about almost a philosophical way in which we approach the industry—

[274] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Never mind philosophy now, how many of the 74 recommendations will be completed?

[275] **Rebecca Evans:** In our report in December, we showed around three quarters had already been completed. A further 25 are things that have an ongoing commitment or are projects that have already started but haven't been completed. So, we're making good progress. Those projects, for example, include EID Cymru and the work we're doing on the quarantine units. I was able to provide an update to Members during questions this week on that.

[276] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Perhaps a note could be provided to us on the outstanding recommendations that are either ongoing or haven't been completed. Diolch yn fawr. Thank you.

[277] A gaf i ddiolch yn fawr i'r Minister and her officials? Gweinidog a'i swyddogion?

[278] I thank you, Minister, and your officials for coming before us and giving comprehensive answers to many of our questions. Diolch yn fawr iawn. Thank you very much indeed.

11:02

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[279] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Iawn, bwyllgor. **Alun Ffred Jones:** Right, committee. Item 3. Eitem 3.

[280] Third item; papers to note.

[281] Bil amgylchedd Cymru—gohebiaeth. Environment Wales Bill—correspondence.

[282] **Joyce Watson:** Noted.

[283] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Noted.

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o Weddill y Cyfarfod

Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Remainder of the Meeting

Cynnig:

Motion:

bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog 17.42.

that the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42.

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.*

[284] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Item 4; we have a recommendation to go to private session.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:03.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11:03.*