



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd The Environment and Sustainability Committee

**Dydd Mercher, 17 Medi 2014
Wednesday, 17 September 2014**

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

These 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
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Julie James) Labour (substitute for Julie James)
Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Llyr Gruffydd	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 (yn dirprwyo ar ran Gwyn R. Price) Labour (substitute for Gwyn R. Price)
Antoinette Sandbach	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Prys Davies	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr, yr Is-adran Ynni, Dŵr a Llifogydd, Llywodraeth Cymru Deputy Director, Energy, Water and Flood Division, Welsh Government
Rebecca Evans	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Dirprwy Weinidog Ffermio a Bwyd) Assembly Member, Labour (the Deputy Minister for Farming and Food)
Dr Christianne Glossop	Y Prif Swyddog Milfeddygol Chief Veterinary Officer
Matthew Quinn	Cyfarwyddwr, Cyfoeth Naturiol, Llywodraeth Cymru Director for Natural Resources, Welsh Government
Carl Sargeant	Aelod Cynulliad Llafur (y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol) Assembly Member, Labour (the Minister for Natural Resources)
Andrew Slade	Cyfarwyddwr, Amaeth, Bwyd a'r Môr, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Agriculture, Food and Marine, Welsh Government

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

Alun Davidson	Clerc Clerk
Elfyn Henderson	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Adam Vaughan	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:14.
The meeting began at 09:14.*

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

- [1] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Bore da a chroeso i'r pwyllgor. Rydych chi'n gwybod y rheolau ynglŷn â'r larwm tân, sef i ddilyn y tywyswyr allan. Diffoddwch eich ffonau symudol, BlackBerrys neu beth bynnag. Mae'r Cynulliad Cenedlaethol yn gweithredu'n ddwyieithog ac mae clustffonau ar gael i glywed y cyfieithiad, wrth gwrs. Peidiwch â chyffwrdd â'r botymau ar y meicroffonau.
- Alun Ffred Jones:** Good morning and welcome to the committee. You know the rules about the fire alarm; you must follow the ushers. Please switch off your mobile phones, BlackBerrys, or whatever. The National Assembly for Wales conducts its business bilingually and there are headsets available to hear the translation, of course. Please do not touch the buttons on the microphones.
- [2] A oes unrhyw Aelod eisiau datgan buddiant? Gwelaf fod Jenny Rathbone.
- Does any Member wish to declare an interest? I see that Jenny Rathbone does.**
- [3] **Jenny Rathbone:** Yes. I am chair of the European programme monitoring committee.
- [4] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Iawn. A oes unrhyw un arall? Gwelaf nad oes, diolch yn fawr. Mae Jeff Cuthbert a Jenny Rathbone yn dirprwyo heddiw a hoffwn eich croesawu chi i'r pwyllgor.
- Alun Ffred Jones:** Okay. Is there anyone else? I see that there is not, thank you very much. Jeff Cuthbert and Jenny Rathbone are substitutes today and we welcome you very much to the committee.

09:15

Craffu ar Waith y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol Scrutiny of the Minister for Natural Resources

- [5] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Rydym hefyd yn croesawu'r Gweinidog, Carl Sargeant, yma atom. Prif bwrpas y sesiwn, wrth gwrs, ydy craffu ar y Gweinidog. A gaf fi eich croesawu chi am y tro cyntaf, Weinidog, i'ch briff newydd? Rwy'n sylweddoli nad ydych chi wedi cael gormod o amser i ymgyswrtio â'r maes, ond rwy'n siŵr y cawn fudd ac y cewch chi fudd o'r sesiwn heddiw. A ydych chi am gyflwyno'r tîm sydd gyda chi?
- Alun Ffred Jones:** We also welcome the Minister, Carl Sargeant, here. The main purpose of the session, of course, is to conduct scrutiny of the Minister. May I welcome you for the first time, Minister, in your new brief? I realise that you have not had too much time to familiarise yourself with the area, but I am sure that we will benefit and that you will benefit from today's session. Do you wish to introduce your team?
- [6] **The Minister for Natural Resources (Carl Sargeant):** Indeed. Thank you, Chair. I will ask my officials to give you their full titles.
- [7] **Mr Davies:** Prys Davies ydwyf i ac rwy'n gyfrifol am ynni, llyfogydd a dŵr yn Llywodraeth Cymru.
- Mr Davies:** I am Prys Davies and I am responsible for energy, water and flood in the Welsh Government.
- [8] **Mr Quinn:** I am Matthew Quinn, director of environment and sustainable

development.

[9] **Mr Slade:** I am Andrew Slade, director of agriculture, food and marine.

[10] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Diolch yn fawr. Awn yn syth i mewn i'r cwestiynau. Gwnaf ddechrau efo Joyce Watson sy'n mynd i sôn am fioamrywiaeth. **Alun Ffred Jones:** Thank you very much. We will go straight into questions. I would like to start with Joyce Watson who is going to talk about biodiversity.

[11] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning, Minister. I appreciate that you have just come into your post, but I want to ask you about the recommendation from the 2011 report on biodiversity, that it be mainstreamed across all departments. In accepting that recommendation, the previous Minister or the Government said that it would undertake an audit of all Government departments and agencies to identify actions for biodiversity. We have had evidence that that has not, as yet, been seen. Therefore, nobody knows what actions, if any, have been taken. Could you give us an update, if not now, then later, on where we are with that?

[12] **Carl Sargeant:** Okay. Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the invitation to come along. You are absolutely right; three days in and it has been quite a daunting task, reading over the weekend about biodiversity and other environmental aspects. However, sustainable development is a common theme that runs through Government, in terms of my previous portfolios as well, and it is something that we take very seriously as a Government. So, it is not all completely new to me.

[13] With regard to the report, Chair—and thank you, Joyce, for your question—we host a group of stakeholders, including Welsh Government and external stakeholders, that are looking at the policy agenda around this. I am very pleased with the briefing that I received from my team with regard to how that is developing. In terms of progress around this, it is important for us to understand that we recognise that this is a Government priority. As a previous Minister in another life—only last week—I had regular meetings with the Minister who was then responsible for this portfolio and we talked about the interaction between different portfolios and how that would have an impact. Therefore, we are working as a Government to deliver on this.

[14] It is early days, but I have asked my team to give me a thorough review of the policy agenda and where we are, exactly. I am really interested in any people who have views or criticisms around that policy. If you want to elaborate on that, I am more than happy to take that back to my department and consider that further.

[15] **Joyce Watson:** So, in terms of a pledge to update us on where you are, Minister, do we have a pledge from you that we can have that within the next few weeks?

[16] **Carl Sargeant:** Certainly, I am more than happy to do that and I will give you a comprehensive note on exactly where we are with that policy agenda, Chair.

[17] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you.

[18] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Antoinette sydd nesaf. **Alun Ffred Jones:** Antoinette is next.

[19] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Thanks. It may be that your officials can help with this, but in 2011, it was recommended that an audit of Welsh Government departments, rather than external stakeholders, be carried out. Has that audit been carried out?

- [20] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes, it has.
- [21] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Why is it, then, that the report has not been published and made available to external stakeholders?
- [22] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, I think that it was an internal report. I think that that is something that, as Government, we learn from, about reviewing our policies, and it is something that we are quite keen to make sure that we implement across the Government.
- [23] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, would you be prepared to publish that report so that outside organisations can also learn?
- [24] **Carl Sargeant:** I will give that further consideration.
- [25] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Thank you. In relation to the recommendations of the previous sustainability committee on biodiversity, can you clarify whether action was actually taken to audit the grants used to support biodiversity, and whether any lessons learned from that audit are incorporated in the design of the nature fund?
- [26] **Carl Sargeant:** ‘Yes’, to all of those questions.
- [27] **Antoinette Sandbach:** What were the lessons learned?
- [28] **Carl Sargeant:** I will ask my officials to respond specifically.
- [29] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Thank you.
- [30] **Mr Quinn:** What was clear was that, principally, there were small-scale grants or contracts through the Countryside Council for Wales, which was effectively the main delivery route. As a result of looking across the board, the immediate response was the creation of the resilient ecosystems fund, which was part of moving to a wider area-based way of working. That was administered in the first period through CCW and transferred to Natural Resources Wales. That has now been superseded by the nature fund, which was very much developed in co-operation and collaboration with the stakeholder group. The particular learning point, I think, is that we are moving from a position with work like the resilient ecosystems fund, where it is really still about wildlife projects—relatively small-scale wildlife projects—and essentially, largely, money being awarded to traditional wildlife groups, to a position with the nature fund where we are looking at larger-scale partnership projects that are open to a much wider group of stakeholders. Indeed, it has encouraged stakeholders to come forward from other areas.
- [31] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Are you willing to write to the committee with the key performance indicators that will be used—so, the baseline data that will be used to measure the outcomes of the nature fund report?
- [32] **Carl Sargeant:** I will give that further consideration. I need to be fully briefed on the department and I will consider that.
- [33] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I understand that. Thank you.
- [34] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Felly, Weinidog, **Alun Ffred Jones:** Therefore, Minister, the mae’r gronfa natur yma yn dosbarthu arian, nature fund distributes money, but you have ond nid oes gennyh gynllun i farnu pa no plan to determine which plans are suitable gynlluniau sydd yn addas ai peidio. Ai dyna’r or not. Is that the situation? sefyllfa?

[35] **Carl Sargeant:** I do not think that it is a fair assessment to say that there is no plan. We do not distribute money on a willy-nilly basis. We are very co-ordinated in what we wish to do and wish to achieve. We have to look at what the nature recovery plan and strategies around that are seeking to deliver. I am confident that my team, and the team working for the previous Minister, are making the appropriate level of scrutiny in determining where that fund goes. It would be fair to say that the strategy is not completed, but the fact of the matter is—and I start with this process—where the stakeholders are engaged with us, we as a Government are working together about how that should be developed. I am very open, as a Minister—as the previous Minister was—about engagement and performance of where we should be attaching this funding. Therefore, I would resist the fact that we are spending our money without a plan.

[36] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Nid oes cynllun adfer natur yn ei le. A ydw i'n iawn wrth ddweud hynny? **Alun Ffred Jones:** There is no plan in place. Am I right to say that?

[37] **Carl Sargeant:** To which plan are you referring?

[38] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mae yna fwriad i ddatblygu cynllun adfer natur. **Alun Ffred Jones:** There is an intention to develop a nature recovery plan.

[39] I refer to the nature recovery plan.

[40] Serch hynny, nid oes cynllun yn ei le. A ydw i'n iawn? **Alun Ffred Jones:** However, there is no plan in place. Am I right about that?

[41] **Carl Sargeant:** Chair, as I said earlier, it is really important to me that we have a structured approach to making investments. I accept that the plan that you refer to is not in place, but I do not accept that we are spending our funding in a way that is not structured. I think that it would be a bad decision to stop any funding now until a strategy, as you referred to, is produced. If the committee suggests to me that we should not put any more money into this nature fund until the strategy is delivered, I will consider that recommendation. However, I do not think that it is a good idea. I think that investing in our communities now is important, in a structured way, but I accept that the plan is not fully implemented.

[42] **Alun Ffred Jones:** It is usual to have a strategy before you start spending money.

[43] **Carl Sargeant:** Chair, as I have given you the offer, it is a matter for the committee to make a recommendation. I have come into post and I have considered where we are at present. I do not accept that we are making funding streams inappropriately; I think that it is a structured approach to making change. It is making change on the ground and stakeholders are involved in that process.

[44] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Diolch yn fawr. Llyr, a ydych chi eisiau symud ymlaen at yr un nesaf? **Alun Ffred Jones:** Thank you very much, Llyr, do you want to move on to the next one?

[45] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Many of us will have been disappointed, of course, that the participative statement on the climate change refresh has been put off twice, through no fault of your own, of course. However, we very much look forward to that and understand that it will be made before half term. However, I want you, if you could, to confirm that there will not be any refreshing of the targets as such—the 3% year-on-year target in terms of carbon emissions and the 40% by 2020.

[46] **Carl Sargeant:** It is not our intention to refresh, but I am sure that the Member will give me a little bit of leeway in terms of my ability to fully understand how we are going to achieve those targets in a more comprehensive way.

[47] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Of course. However, all the evidence does point to the fact that it is becoming increasingly unlikely that the Government will be meeting those targets, which therefore necessitates action, or accelerated action, from Government. Can you confirm that it will be your intention to work harder in order to meet those targets because, obviously, many of us were disappointed at the decision that you made as Minister for Housing and Regeneration in relation to energy efficiency in homes et cetera? Maybe the Government should be pushing the boundaries a little bit further. So, in your new role, can you assure us that you will be accelerating those actions?

[48] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course. They were difficult discussions that I had with the Minister for the environment, when I was the Minister for housing, about my view of the reduction of those targets. We have to take that as just one part of the overall agenda of climate change and tackling climate change. As I said, it is not our intention to make changes to any target data and it will mean, exactly as the Member says, that we will have to increase opportunities. Again, as Minister for housing, I met with the Minister involved to discuss what we could consider cross-Government; I will pursue that with some rigour now.

[49] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you; that is reassuring. One of the key features of the Government initiative in this respect has been the sectoral adaptation plans. Many of us will be quite disappointed at the mixed progress of some of those. What do you intend to do to make sure that they finally get off the ground, because I think that you are probably the third Minister that I have asked this question to?

[50] **Carl Sargeant:** I share concern about any delays and I will be asking my team so that I fully understand what those delays are. It is too early for me to make a decision on that yet, but what I will ask the team to consider is why there are delays. If they are late for a good reason, to get the right plan, then I am comfortable with that. Rather than being based on a timeline and getting a bad plan that will not deliver, waiting a little bit longer and getting it right is important to me. So, that is what we are trying to juggle at the moment, but I accept that we have to do more and that the sector has to do more, and it is something that I have my team looking at currently.

[51] **Llyr Gruffydd:** And 2020 is only six years away.

[52] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Is there anybody else on climate change? Jenny Rathbone is next.

[53] **Jenny Rathbone:** Minister, if we are going to meet our 40% target by 2020, we are going to need to do something quite radical now because of the time that it takes to implement any policies. So, specifically on areas where we are flat-lining at the moment, for example, on air pollution from nutrient nitrogens and chemicals affecting river quality, which is largely where the polluter is not the person who is suffering the consequences, what measures do you think we can take to get everybody dealing with this?

[54] **Carl Sargeant:** It goes some way in terms of the legislation profile that we have in Government. We will be introducing the environment Bill, as you will be aware, and you are probably much more au fait with it than me at this point. The environment Bill and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill have an impact in terms of the social responsibility of the public sector primarily. However, it is something that I have already got to grips with in terms of my new department, in saying, 'Look, we can't just do this on our own'. We can create policy and implement policy, but this is a cultural shift and we have to start people talking about how the environment operates and the responsibility that they have in that

process as well.

09:30

[55] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, I think that we have a big communication exercise to do about getting people to understand what their value is on the earth. A good report came out yesterday by Lord Stern regarding climate change and, again, it is about people's understanding of the global expectation of change and how we have to look after that together. So, Government certainly has a responsibility; we can legislate around this and find the appropriate places. However, actually, it is a cultural shift—people understanding that they have a responsibility as well.

[56] **Jenny Rathbone:** I agree. Children and eco-committees are more—

[57] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I turn to Mick Antoniw, then Jeff Cuthbert—

[58] **Jenny Rathbone:** Sorry, could I just—?

[59] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Sorry, Jenny.

[60] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just had a second question around the absolutely crucial area of transport and the accessibility issue. In a place like Cardiff, which is expanding, if we do not get people out of their cars, we are going to have a really serious air pollution problem.

[61] **Carl Sargeant:** I was going to say that, fortunately for the committee and I suppose fortunately for me, I still have the Minister for planning's function. I think that the cross-cutting theme and the good thing about this is that we have the three legislation profiles. We have planning, environment and wellbeing of future generations all under one roof. I think that there are key elements that interlink all three Bills—and heritage as well, in fact, but that does not sit with us. So, actually, there are fundamental issues that run right the way through all of those Bills.

[62] Part of this is the sustainable development message that already exists in Government, but we are actually going to legislate on this. Therefore, the things that the Member touches on about sustainable communities and transport issues are critical in the planning process as well. So, they are the things that my department as a whole will look at, and, hopefully, you will start to see some changes.

[63] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mick is next. There are three of you to come in, so please be brief.

[64] **Mick Antoniw:** Minister, your comment on climate change and social responsibility is music to my ears. May I ask you about shale gas and what is fracking, effectively? This question has four parts to it. First, is it your intention to engage with the UK Government over the issue of licences for drilling? Secondly, do you think you will be considering the issue as to whether that is an area that should be devolved to the Welsh Government? Thirdly, have you any views or will you be giving consideration to the issue of whether there should be a specific technical advice note issued? Fourthly, do you have any views as to whether shale gas exploitation is compatible with the Welsh Government's commitment to renewable energy targets?

[65] **Carl Sargeant:** I will give you four very brief answers and write to the committee and the Member with a more detailed response. We are engaged with the UK Government in terms of the opportunities and challenges that the exploration of shale gas presents. The question of whether it should be devolved is something that I would have to discuss further with the First Minister, although I do have responsibility for energy policy now.

[66] I think that we hold a very strong position in terms of the precautionary approach to fracking in Wales. There is an interesting licensing regime that is partly UK-based and partly local authority and Welsh Government-based. Chair, to be presumptuous, I would be happy to send you a flowchart of the planning processes, if it would be helpful for the committee's consideration of fracking. It is quite complex. I do not believe at this current stage that we require a new technical advice note. I have given that consideration already.

[67] I am sorry. Your final question was—.

[68] **Mick Antoniw:** It was on the compatibility of the exploitation of shale gas with our climate change and environmental targets.

[69] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you for reminding me of that question. I think that there are some huge challenges that face us in relation to energy opportunities, whatever they may be, and energy policy needs to be considered further. Again, I have just taken over responsibility for energy from the First Minister and I will be asking for further reports on that.

[70] In relation to fracking in particular—and I know that the Member has an interest in this—there are still a lot of unknowns and I think that that is the issue that we have to try to consider. I am not making a judgment on this; I am just suggesting that we need more information and that is something that the UK Government and we and others could do some more work on.

[71] **Mick Antoniw:** Would the Minister consider that this is the appropriate area, given that there is obviously a lot of concern that things are moving very quickly, to provide a Government statement on in relation to the current state of play, although it may not be conclusive, in the near future?

[72] **Carl Sargeant:** I will give that consideration, Chair. Our position has not changed, and I thought that was pretty clear. However, I more than welcome an opportunity to reconsider that and to put something in the public domain.

[73] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Thank you. Diolch yn fawr. Jeff Cuthbert is next.

[74] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you very much, Chair. Minister, I have two points. The first is on the issue of fracking. Fracking, of course, is the process whereby the shale gas is extracted. Internationally, there may well be other processes or variations of fracking. So, can you give us an assurance that you will look at international examples of the extraction of shale gas in other parts of the world to see what lessons are there for us? It is a new technology for us on these shores, but it has been used elsewhere. So, please could we have your assurance that international examples will be looked at? You also mentioned the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, which does ring a bell with me. *[Laughter.]* I can see the advantages, clearly, of having that Bill and having planning and environment under one roof. It clearly makes it easier. In terms of the goals, it is having a resilient Wales that is probably the most appropriate in terms of the issue of the environment. As you know, targets will not be on the face of the Bill, but what will be linked to the Bill—not on the face of it but linked to it—are the steps that can be taken by various public bodies to enable the goal to be met or to enable us to work towards it. So, I am just really asking for your assurance that you will keep the committee informed as those steps are developed, obviously in partnership with other public bodies.

[75] **Carl Sargeant:** There are two things to say. Thank you, Jeff, for the question, and thank you for the opportunity to continue the work that you did on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill. It is well placed and I am really looking forward to taking that

forward now into legislation. I agree with you that there are great opportunities in the Bill to change the ethos, the principle, of why we do these things. That is what the future generations Bill needs to be—how we do business. That is something that Jenny can relate to in terms of making those changes at the grass roots, really. This is why we do things. I just remind the committee that shale gas extraction is a reserved matter. Power over licensing conditions is with the UK Government. The evidence base largely lies with it, but it is something we are considering further in terms of how we understand that better with regard to the implications for Wales. As I said, Chair, I will give a commitment to give you more information on that.

[76] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Is your question on climate change?

[77] **Antoinette Sandbach:** It is on green energy and Ynni'r Fro, which the Minister has responsibility for.

[78] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Okay, be very quick.

[79] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Minister, Ynni'r Fro is a community programme that is designed to get people engaged with their place on the planet and how they can help. Can you write to us perhaps with an update on how many megawatts have actually been built under that programme and are now generating? Would it be possible to have a table that shows the number of communities or projects that asked for assistance, the number of projects that actually got assistance and the number of megawatts now built under Ynni'r Fro?

[80] **Carl Sargeant:** If we hold those data, I would be happy to share them with the committee.

[81] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I am very grateful. Secondly, one of the big issues around green energy is connection to the grid, particularly small three-phase connections with companies like ScottishPower. That has proved to be a real barrier to entry. Is your department doing any work to look at those connections and to meet with the companies to try to see whether that barrier to entry can be removed?

[82] **Carl Sargeant:** There are two elements to the question. Certainly, energy policy has just come into this department, and it is something that we will be considering in terms of the policy agenda around the creation of energy et cetera. However, the infrastructure, I understand, is still with the Minister with responsibility for enterprise. I will liaise with her for a response to your question regarding companies and what the infrastructure programme is or is likely to be.

[83] **Antoinette Sandbach:** It is the small-scale connections that are the issue. That is why I ask.

[84] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Okay. Russell, do you have a question on rural access?

[85] **Russell George:** I was going to ask a question on allotments, if I can, Chair.

[86] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Okay, yes.

[87] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. With regard to the Welsh Government's consultation on allotments, I wonder whether you could tell us a little bit about whether you believe that your consultation document addresses access to suitable land for community groups and individuals wishing to grow food. Are you content with the proposals in the consultation?

[88] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes.

[89] **Russell George:** Thank you, Minister. Can you outline what discussions you or, at least, your officials have had with the farming unions?

[90] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes. Unfortunately, I have not had any yet, but it is certainly my intention to have them. For reference, Chair, the agriculture sector falls under my Deputy Minister's portfolio. However, it is my intention to meet with the farming unions as a collective, along with the Deputy Minister, in order to have initial conversations about how relationships should develop within the Cabinet context.

[91] With regard to allotments, I understand that my officials have had discussions with the farming unions. The consultation is out. I am not going to be predetermining what the consultation might or might not say, although I am aware that the farming unions have not yet made a response to the allotments Green Paper.

[92] **Russell George:** I wonder whether you could set out any legislative proposals that you believe are going to be laid before the Assembly.

[93] **Carl Sargeant:** No, I cannot, because, as I said, I am not prepared to prejudge that. I do not know what the outcome will be. Being realistic, irrespective of whether it is the allotments policy or other legislation, the legislation profile for this term is pretty full and, therefore—not knowing yet what will come back on the consultation—it would be quite challenging to introduce a Bill at this stage of this Assembly term.

[94] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Julie Morgan, I know that you wanted to ask a question on allotments. I do not know whether it has been answered.

[95] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you very much. I welcomed the Green Paper enormously when it was published, and I know that it is very important to people like me in terms of urban seats where we can identify land where we can have food growing and community gardens. One of the projects that I am engaged with at the moment is trying to get a small allotment or community garden on the estate where my office is situated, and there is a lot of interest from the local community. However, this depends on the initiative of the local authorities, because it is mainly local authority land that has to be identified. Certainly, Cardiff seems very keen from my discussions with it, but I was wondering whether you have an overall view of what the approach of the local authorities is to this sort of proposal.

[96] **Carl Sargeant:** We do not have the complete data and, as I said, the consultation is still open. I think that it is on 6 October that it closes, so we are still awaiting the data. It is a general rule of thumb that there are some authorities that come in on the last day, so we will have to wait until then, I expect. However, I fully expect that there will probably have to be some legislation in place in order to encourage authorities to consider this as a serious proposal, but, as I said, I do not know what the detail is in terms of the full responses to the consultation yet, and it is something that I will give serious consideration to. It is a Government priority; it is something that we wish to pursue, but we will just have to wait and see what comes back. However, I am grateful for your support. I know from passing your office on a daily basis that you have some great crops of various plants growing in the window.

[97] **Julie Morgan:** Tomatoes and parsley. [*Laughter.*] I wonder whether this scheme could be expanded to buildings in the cities, because I know that there are some very successful projects where office workers have developed gardens and, certainly, I know that in New York it has been a huge thing to develop greenery around offices. I am really pleased that, in our car park, the staff have developed a small strip of land with wildflowers and that there are lots of bees around. I wondered if this Green Paper thinking could be expanded to

think of the city and what we could do with businesses.

[98] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course, and that is the whole purpose of the consultation. I would welcome a personal response from you, Julie, in terms of your interest in this. Again, we will have to give full consideration to the responses. 'Allotments' is a very general term and that does not mean that it is just in a rural environment. They are really important in city and urban areas, too. So, I look forward to a response from you and from the committee, certainly in terms of the consultation process.

09:45

[99] **Alun Ffred Jones:** William Powell, I believe that you had a quick question.

[100] **William Powell:** I would like to ask you a couple of questions on access, but I would like to kick off, Minister, by offering my congratulations on your appointment to your new and extended brief. I have a brief question on anaerobic digestion. Now, for the first time, AD and wider energy issues sit with planning, and there may be an opportunity there for a potential refresh of our approach. There has always been a difficulty because of the divorce between the licensing regime on the one hand and the planning issues on the other. I have come across quite a lot of concerns in recent months regarding Welsh Government policy on AD, particularly the impact on communities. Will you give some consideration to a potential refresh of Welsh Government policy on AD, particularly around the appropriateness of some sort of buffering arrangement around communities that could be adversely impacted by anaerobic digestion developments, and particularly by developments of scale? Linked to that, there has also been some concern regarding the current capacity of Natural Resources Wales to deal with major AD issues, both in the planning phase and also in the monitoring phase that follows.

[101] **Carl Sargeant:** Development has two strands, usually: positive and negative. Wherever you are in Wales or the UK, people have different views on this. I was very familiar with this within the housing division. Everybody wanted housing, but they did not want social housing by them. I certainly do not agree with that view. Once again, it is very similar to this proposal. There is a very positive outlook on anaerobic digestion. I think that Welsh policy around this is very clear, but I also understand the community impacts, and that is a planning consideration that needs to be assessed. I do not think that we need to refresh policy on this; the policy is clear. The issue is how that is interpreted and understood by the local community. However, once again, determination on planning terms is a matter for local authorities.

[102] I will look at the issue raised by the Member regarding NRW's capacity. I do not recognise that. I am confident that it is doing an excellent job, and I am very impressed by the way in which NRW has not only taken over the department now but also the way in which that was operating when I was in the other division. So, I do not recognise that, but I will check on it to give the Member confidence.

[103] So, I listened carefully to the Member's questions, but I would not probably support the principle that we have a problem regarding anaerobic digestion and the way in which the policy has been derived.

[104] **William Powell:** Chair, may I continue briefly on the issue of access?

[105] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Please ask a succinct question.

[106] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Minister, do you have a publication date for the Green Paper on access?

[107] **Carl Sargeant:** It will be published in the early spring. Early spring next year.

[108] **William Powell:** Minister, can you give us an assurance that the concerns about the impacts on the agricultural sector will be taken fully on board when that is published?

[109] **Carl Sargeant:** My intention is to consider all sectors and how it impacts on them. So, that would be inclusive.

[110] **Alun Ffred Jones:** You wanted to discuss forestry, Antoinette. Joyce will then ask about coastal flooding. We are running out of time.

[111] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Minister, it might be helpful for you to read the evidence session with NRW and the forestry stakeholders, who were highly critical of the way in which NRW is dealing with forestry. In relation to the poor relationship between NRW and the forestry sector, what steps are being taken to improve that relationship? I believe that NRW has now clarified that it is not a Crown exempt body and therefore that it is required to administer the same regulation regime to itself as it administers to the commercial sector. Could you clarify that, because it gave evidence initially that it was Crown exempt?

[112] **Carl Sargeant:** On that specific issue of the Crown exemption, I will write to the committee with the detail on that. I have been briefed on the relationship between NRW and the forestry sector. It concerns me if that is perceived as being a poor relationship. I will be meeting the chair and the chief executive of NRW next week, I believe, to have discussions in general. This is something that I will consider raising with them both. I would not paint such a bad picture, actually. It is about opinion, and, of course, relationships can be built upon. This is something that I, as Minister, would like to see, ensuring that we have a healthy relationship with all sectors. We may not always agree, but we can have the discussion and I think that engagement and communication are critical. Therefore, I will want to be assured by the chair that that is certainly in place, and it is something that I will be keeping a close eye on.

[113] **Antoinette Sandbach:** One of the factors of identifying one of the problems with the climate change target is the maturity of Welsh forestry, and the fact that a lot of that forestry is now being harvested. Commercial forestry acts as a fast-capturing sink for carbon capture and storage, and there are huge opportunities for biogeneration using wood products in the long term. Will you be looking at the overlap between your energy portfolio and the climate change portfolio in terms of the role that commercial species can play in carbon capture and storage, energy generation, and growing the forestry estate in Wales to secure future jobs?

[114] **Carl Sargeant:** Indeed. I think that there is an additional opportunity there in terms of the economy and in terms of the housing division as well. That is something that I was exploring there, and I will further that discussion with the new Minister for housing to see whether there is any more that we can do for the forestry industry. I think that it is a great opportunity that Wales needs to exploit further.

[115] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Joyce Watson, I think that you wanted to go after coastal erosion, was it? No, it was coastal flooding, sorry.

[116] **Joyce Watson:** It was on coastal flooding plans, because my area incorporates just about all the coast, so I have a particular interest. Minister, we have had a wonderful summer, and people have enjoyed the beach, but we all remember last winter when that was not the case. So, moving on from that, your colleague as previous Minister talked about a plan on which coastal deflooding mechanisms would be delivered and funded. Could you tell us where you are with that plan? The delivery agent for drawing that up, I believe, was NRW,

and 42 recommendations out of 45 were accepted in principle. Could we have some information, further to accepting in principle, as to where we are now?

[117] **Carl Sargeant:** It is a really important piece of the portfolio in terms of protecting people and property across Wales, and this is a priority for my department in assuring and giving me confidence that we can manage this effectively. It goes without saying that we have some fantastic emergency services and volunteers who have helped during this process, but it is also thoroughly recognisable the significant financial investment that we have made in Wales to provide protection for our communities. We will continue to do that by making sure that we make the appropriate provision. The planning provision around that is also an important factor.

[118] To pick up on the report that the Member raised, this was one of the first briefings that I had in terms of flooding because it is a prime issue that we need to consider as we move into the winter period. There were 47 recommendations, five of which were agreed in principle. The previous Minister did not refuse those recommendations, and the reason he did that was because they are quite complex, involving many stakeholders. One involved Network Rail and interaction about investment and opportunity. While that recommendation was accepted in principle, there is more work to do on that and that is what we are continuing to do with stakeholders. Therefore, we were not able to fully comply and give confidence to you about that recommendation, but it is something that we are committed to pursuing further in order to complete the 47 recommendations that we have agreed—some in principle, as the Member recognises.

[119] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, can I ask the Minister through you whether we have a timeline for this?

[120] **Carl Sargeant:** The five recommendations that were accepted in principle all varied, so I will look to see whether I can give a date to the committee, and I will respond. I will send you a note on the five recommendations accepted in principle and where we are on each of them in terms of progress, if that is helpful.

[121] **Joyce Watson:** Finally, I note that NRW has been strengthened and that expertise has been brought in, Are you confident that there is the expertise in NRW to deal with coastal flooding?

[122] **Carl Sargeant:** At this point, I am confident. We have many levers, but I certainly do not control the weather, although I have been accused of many things. [*Laughter.*] I was being very flippant there but actually it is a very serious point, and ensuring that resilience in the service is critical. I have asked my team to give me confidence and at this point in time, I am confident, but we have to see how the environment changes. While we can deal with this as an action point, I think fundamentally—as some of the questions that you have raised with me this morning show, on what we can do to prevent flooding and protect communities in a different way as opposed to a reactive way—it is something that we have to think about holistically across the portfolio. Flooding is a very serious issue. Are we confident that we are managing it well at the moment? Yes, we are, but I cannot give any guarantees about the weather or what it will throw at us over the next few months or years.

[123] **Alun Ffred Jones:** On the same point, Antoinette.

[124] **Antoinette Sandbach:** Yes, on flooding. There are issues across north Wales in relation to the Flood Re scheme, particularly where communities have suffered flooding. I do not think that there is very great public awareness that if any housing has been built on flood plains after 2009, they will not be covered by the flood re-insurance scheme. What steps is the Welsh Government taking on this, because it is high risk for home owners and it puts a lot of

pressure on local authorities, which are potentially liable if they grant planning permission to build on a flood plain?

[125] **Carl Sargeant:** I wrote to the UK Government yesterday on this very matter. I do not agree with the UK Government's position on this, and it disadvantages Wales considerably.

[126] **Alun Ffred Jones:** In order to protect some of these coastal communities and so on, you will need some serious finance. When you formulate the plan and agree to it, are you looking to announce or will there be reference to financing those programmes?

[127] **Carl Sargeant:** Finance is a very tricky one, as the Member will know. Of course, all the members of Cabinet are looking for additional funding or innovative ways of receiving funding from the Minister for finance. It is a conversation that I will be having with her. Then, of course, if there are any further news stories, you will be first to know, Chair.

[128] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I am sure that I will not be the first to know. *[Laughter.]*

[129] **Carl Sargeant:** Maybe not.

[130] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Russell George, you are next.

[131] **Russell George:** Perhaps you could let the committee know when the final version of the water strategy is likely to be published.

[132] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I will do. I do not have a date, but I will write to the Member.

[133] **Russell George:** Perhaps with a timeline as well. Thank you.

[134] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Llyr, ti sydd â'r **Alun Ffred Jones:** Llyr, you have the final cwestiwn olaf. question.

[135] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Just very quickly on the proposed ban on drift nets from the European Commission, obviously, it would be very detrimental to the sector in Wales. I met with officials from the European Commission department over the summer, and I was told that no representations had been received from Wales as part of its consultation. Could you or your officials confirm whether that is correct?

[136] **Mr Slade:** I think that we responded in consultation with the UK. The key thing here was that the member state got its views in quickly, and we have been working very closely with colleagues in the UK, who share our view that this proposal would unnecessarily catch local fishermen, which is not what was intended here. The Commission's proposal was really aimed at the very large drift nets used in the Mediterranean and in the Baltic.

[137] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I note from a letter to the committee from your predecessor on this issue that you are in discussions with the UK Government on this. Clearly, there will be an emphasis as well now on the European Parliament being a part of the deliberations and the decisions, so I presume that you are engaging with the relevant chairs of committees and obviously with the Welsh MEPs, as well.

[138] **Carl Sargeant:** We will consider this further. I will have an urgent meeting with my officials on this specific issue.

[139] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Deuaf â'r sesiwn **Alun Ffred Jones:** I will bring this session to hon i ben. Diolch yn fawr i'r Gweinidog. an end. Thank you to the Minister.

[140] I thank you, Minister, for that quick canter around your brief. Next time, we will not be as nice, obviously. [*Laughter.*] Thank you very much for the session this morning and obviously we will return to a number of these issues in the coming months.

[141] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Diolch yn fawr **Alun Ffred Jones:** Thank you to the iawn i'r Gweinidog. Cawn egwyl am 10 Minister. We will now break for 10 minutes. munud.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 09:59 a 10:09.
The meeting adjourned between 09:59 and 10:09.*

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod ar gyfer Eitemau 4 a 5
Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the
Meeting for Items 4 and 5**

[142] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Hoffwn eich **Alun Ffred Jones:** I welcome you back to croesawu yn ôl i'r pwyllgor. Mae angen i the committee. Someone needs to propose a rywun wneud cynnig i wahardd y cyhoedd a motion to exclude the public under Standing dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42. Order 17.42.

[143] **William Powell:** Cynigiau fod **William Powell:** I move that
*y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y the committee resolves to exclude the public
cyhoedd o'r cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol from the meeting in accordance with
Sefydlog 17.42. Standing Order 17.42.*

[144] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Gwelaf fod y **Alun Ffred Jones:** I see that the committee
pwyllgor yn gytûn. is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10:09.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10:09.*

*Ailymgynullodd y pwyllgor yn gyhoeddus am 11:46.
The committee reconvened in public at 11:46.*

**Bil Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol (Cymru): Paratoi ar gyfer Ystyriaeth y
Pwyllgor
The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill: Preparation for Committee's
Consideration**

[145] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Croeso i'r **Alun Ffred Jones:** Welcome to the pwyllgor, Ddirprwy Weinidog, am y tro committee, Deputy Minister, for the first cyntaf. Llongyfarchiadau ar eich penodiad. time. Congratulations on your appointment. Pwrpas y sesiwn hon yw craffu ar faterion The purpose of the session is to scrutinise sydd o fewn eich portffolio. A ydych eisiau matters in your portfolio. Would you like to cyflwyno'ch tîm? introduce your team?

[146] **The Deputy Minister for Farming and Food (Rebecca Evans):** Diolch, Gadeirydd. To my left, I have Andrew Slade, who is the director of agriculture, food and marine; I believe that you have already seen Andrew this morning. On my right is Dr Christianne

Glossop, Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales.

[147] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Diolch yn fawr. We will kick off.

[148] Llyr Gruffydd, wyt ti eisiau dechrau? Llyr Gruffydd, do you want to start?

[149] **Llyr Gruffydd:** I will ask a few questions around bovine TB. First of all, when can we expect to see a report assessing the impact of the vaccination that is happening in the intensive action areas?

[150] **Rebecca Evans:** Thank you. Just to start, I recognise that bovine TB continues to be one of the major issues facing the farming industry in Wales. I have spent a very useful summer visiting farms, speaking to farmers at county shows and so on. It is very clear to me that it is a devastating disease and one that, as a Government, we are working hard to eradicate. I have immediately identified that as one of my priorities. You know that we have a comprehensive TB eradication programme that has been in place for more than five years. That is based on evidence, and there is annual testing of cattle—six-monthly testing in the IAA. There are also strict biosecurity measures and movement controls as well, so badger vaccination is only one part of our approach. We rely on a high level of co-operation with landowners and farmers, and I am grateful to them for that.

[151] With regard to the report, it is important to remember that the IAA is not a controlled trial; it is part of a package and part of a treatment area. Other measures are being applied there, and I have just gone through those. So, it is not possible to isolate the effect that vaccination is having; any benefits would be as a result of a combination of the measures that I have just outlined. However, to monitor the impact of those combined measures in the IAA, the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency has been commissioned to provide its report, to which you refer, and I will ask Christianne to elaborate on that in a moment.

[152] I can tell you that 1,000 badgers have already been vaccinated in the area so far this year. Last year, there were 1,300, and we expect to finish vaccinating at the end of October, so we will be at around the same kind of figure. I saw vaccination taking place a couple of weeks ago, and it was a really professional operation. I will ask Christianne to talk a little about the report that we are expecting.

[153] **Dr Glossop:** Thank you, Deputy Minister. We are monitoring this area very carefully, but we are not looking at it in complete isolation; we need to look at it in the context of the broader picture across the whole of Wales. However, on an annual basis, we are producing a report describing the success of the badger vaccination work and the other measures that are in place.

[154] In terms of demonstrating the TB statistics for that area, and trying to draw any conclusions between that and the work that has been going on, this is a five-year programme, so, actually, we need to wait until the end of the fifth year of vaccination before we are able to put the figures for that area alongside the figures for the rest of Wales and attempt to draw any conclusions.

[155] As the Deputy Minister has pointed out, it is not a controlled trial, so any benefit that we see in that area will be the result of a combination of all of the measures that we have had in place.

[156] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you for that. I know that Cymorth TB has been allowed to continue—the pilot schemes that were originally in place—and I think that that is to be welcomed. However, Deputy Minister, if stakeholders in the Cymorth TB area—they may be

the vets who are involved there, predominantly—were to come to you to tell you that everything that can be done within the existing regime is being done, all biosecurity elements are being utilised to the maximum and all movement restrictions et cetera are being respected, yet despite sticking to all of those requirements, time and again farms in those areas are going down with bovine TB—. If the professionals came to you and told you that, in their judgment, an element of a limited cull would be a valuable addition to the tools available to them in that area, is that something that you would be open-minded to? Is that something that you would be willing to consider?

[157] **Rebecca Evans:** I know that my officials have already received a Cymorth TB evaluation report, which was carried out by Dr Gareth Endicott and Dr Kim Ward of Cardiff University. I hear that it is a positive assessment of our current approach and what we are achieving, but it does make a number of recommendations. I have not yet seen the report, but it does evaluate the experiences of farmers, private vets and Government vets involved in those project areas. I have asked for a copy of that report to be submitted to me early next week. I will consider the findings and share the report with the committee in due course. It would also be worth me pointing out the latest figures on bovine TB. They came out on 10 September, so the committee might not have had a chance yet to look at them. They show 809 new herd incidents of BTB in Wales between July 2013 and June 2014, compared with 990 the previous year, so that is an 18% decrease on the previous year. In terms of new herd incidents, they are the lowest ever recorded in three months consecutively since 2008. The number of cattle slaughtered in Wales as a result of bovine TB in the year leading up to June was 6,015, a fall of 27% on the previous year, at 8,210. So, the statistics do show a continuing downward trend, which I am sure we all welcome.

[158] **Llyr Gruffydd:** They do indeed and we all welcome that. However, in answering my question, if you may, would you entertain a request to introduce a limited cull, or would you dismiss it outright?

[159] **Rebecca Evans:** I will wait to see what the report comes up with when I receive it early next week.

[160] **Llyr Gruffydd:** May I ask about the consultation around TB compensation and the proposed changes in the compensation payment and the movement to table valuation? Can you tell us whether you have had an opportunity to consider the outcome of that? If you have, when are you are likely to make an announcement?

[161] **Rebecca Evans:** You will be aware that, over the summer, I published the responses that we received to that consultation, which took place earlier in the year. On 18 July, I announced, through a written statement, that I had asked my officials to consider the consultation responses in detail and provide me with options on a way forward. I intend to make a statement on my next steps in October.

[162] **Joyce Watson:** As you know, I am opposed to any badger cull; I will just repeat that on the record. We have seen a decrease in bovine TB—that is obvious—but the policy that we are currently working our way through, part of which is the five-year vaccination programme in the area close to where I live, has yet to see its full results. What we have evidence of—and this is where I am coming to a question—is the absolute fiasco that happened in England and is now being repeated; it will probably be an equal fiasco, from everything that I see. What I am looking for, in terms of an answer from you, Deputy Minister, is that we will not be repeating that fiasco here in Wales. All the evidence, and this is predicated on scientific evidence, demonstrates that to try to eradicate TB in the way that it has been approached in England will only exacerbate it, because there is no defined area.

[163] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I am not sure if that is a question. What is the question, please?

[164] **Joyce Watson:** That is my question—that we will not repeat the type of culling programme that is currently being undertaken in England, because all the evidence, and what we are doing is predicated on evidence, shows that it would be an absolute and utter failure.

[165] **Rebecca Evans:** Chair, as you know, our current approach was based on a science-led review, which was a manifesto commitment at the last Assembly election. So, our approach is science led. It is for DEFRA Ministers to defend DEFRA policy, but we take an interest in other countries' approaches, in terms of comparing our approach. However, our approach is clear and it has been set out: it is the five-year comprehensive programme that we have. Badgers are only a very small part of the issue; there are movement controls and animal testing is the big jewel in our crown, if you like to look at it in those terms.

[166] I have already written to Liz Truss at DEFRA expressing my concerns about the fact that Welsh farmers can buy cattle from England that have never been tested for bovine TB, because—. They take a risk-based approach, but they have a four-year testing policy. So, some cattle might never have been tested. There is a case that committee members will be aware of in Cumbria, where cattle were sold at a Cumbrian market that spread bovine TB to other cattle in Wales. I visited one of those farms over the summer. So, I am keen that our Welsh farmers take a risk-based approach to trading.

[167] We are launching a communication campaign to encourage our farmers to consider the risks when buying. Posters and leaflets will be sent to cattle markets and veterinary practices. We also have work ongoing to develop an overarching TB accreditation scheme, and that is being overseen by the cattle health certification standards. That is due in 2015.

[168] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I am keen to move on to other subjects, but Antoinette will come in, very briefly.

[169] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I want to move on to the rural development plan, if possible.

[170] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Russell will ask a question about TB.

[171] **Russell George:** Is there any mechanism by which a licence could be applied for from you to cull badgers in a specific area by a farmer or a landowner?

[172] **Rebecca Evans:** I have not received any such request.

[173] **Russell George:** Is there an option for a landowner to make an application to you?

[174] **Rebecca Evans:** The chief veterinary officer, perhaps, could reply to that.

[175] **Dr Glossop:** I think that you are referring to the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, where there are various opportunities to apply for a licence to remove badgers under particular circumstances—for example, if they are causing particular damage to a highway. I think that there have been cases where a graveyard or a building has been damaged. Within the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, consideration is given to the removal of badgers for health-control purposes. I think that that is what you are talking about. However, in terms of the detail of that, we are not in a position to discuss that today.

[176] **Russell George:** Thank you for that. I appreciate that. I was not sure of the circumstances and you have clarified that. Has the Welsh Government received any such application over the recent few years?

[177] **Rebecca Evans:** No.

[178] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I would like to ask about the announcement regarding the RDP, which was rather a long time ago now. There was a statement from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport about the overall allocations for the RDP. Have those changed since 8 July?

[179] **Rebecca Evans:** No, they have not. The reason for that is that our plans have been submitted now and have been accepted by the European Commission. So, we are now entering into a period of negotiation. We expect approval by December, but there is room at the moment to have discussions and to change the relative blocks of money. You will probably be aware that we have £105 million in the human and social capital measures pot, and in area-based measures we have £172 million—

[180] **Antoinette Sandbach:** We have the figures. The Minister for Economy, Science and Transport made a commitment that she would look at giving further consideration to moorland schemes. Have you discussed that with the Minister? Are you looking at a stand-alone moorland area support scheme?

12:00

[181] **Rebecca Evans:** I know that there is some concern about moorland. I met with many moorland farmers over the course of the summer. I have to take a view as to what is best for the industry as a whole and what is good use of public money. Not all farms with moorland lose out; I think that that is important to remember. Many will actually have higher payments under the new pillar 1 than they would have had before. Equally, there will be some farms in other parts of the industry—dairy for example—which will actually lose out to the same extent as moorland. So, I do recognise those concerns, but any decision in terms of providing extra financial support to moorland would mean that extra support would also be given to farms that already stand to gain.

[182] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So is your answer ‘no’?

[183] **Rebecca Evans:** No. My answer is that I will be making a statement in due course as to my approach to supporting the moorlands, but I am offering a bespoke service to those individual farms that have been affected by losing out in terms of their payments. However, in terms of an area of natural constraint, that it is not something that I am considering at the moment, and we are certainly not able to target European funding directly at those specific farms that are losing out because that comes outside of the rules.

[184] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I do not know whether you have had an opportunity to meet with the Woodland Trust, but I think that specific concerns have been raised about the availability of the woodland planting scheme under the next RDP. Clearly, the Welsh Government has a commitment to create 100,000 ha of new woodland; it is way off the mark on that commitment. I understand that the Woodland Trust had been expecting a planting scheme to be launched at the Royal Welsh Show; I do not think that it was. Is there going to be a scheme available for the 2014-15 period?

[185] **Rebecca Evans:** I have not had any communication from the Woodland Trust, but, obviously, I would be more than happy to meet with it if it wanted to discuss it. We have not been able to make a woodland creation grants scheme for this coming planting season. I might ask Andrew to come in on this, but my understanding is that that was due to the transfer of the Glastir woodland creation scheme to the Welsh Government from Natural Resources Wales, the timing of changes that were published in the Commission regulations, and the availability of suitable technical resources. However, what I can say is that this year we will be supporting woodland creation schemes under the Nature Fund and the next RDP proposals

include support for the new creation of woodland under Glastir, including agroforestry options that are appropriate for Welsh agriculture, and I expect to have those schemes open in the spring of next year. However, perhaps Andrew could add something.

[186] **Mr Slade:** I do not think that there is much to add to that, Deputy Minister. We are in the transition year for the RDP and for the old plan into the new programme. We are negotiating with the Commission on the new elements of the programme, including woodland planting, as the Deputy Minister has mentioned. We are not going to be in a position to run a scheme for this planting season, but the expectation is that we will be for the next one.

[187] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So—sorry, this is my final question. In terms of all the RDP fund allocations and the titles under which they have been allocated, are we going to get a comprehensive list of which programmes are going to be included in the RDP?

[188] **Rebecca Evans:** We are currently developing our plans and that has been done through extensive engagement with stakeholders. We have had four written consultations and specific events on Glastir, organics and the food and drink action plan. It is my intention that some schemes will start in January. In terms of designing those schemes, it is very much my intention to do so in partnership with the industry, listening to what the industry tells us that it needs, and then we form those schemes to do that. My discussions with the industry over the summer suggested that we have the same vision for it, and that is for it to become more profitable, more resilient, and less reliant on subsidies, because we cannot continue to expect these kinds of levels of subsidies from Europe in future years.

[189] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Jenny Rathbone, is your question on the RDP?

[190] **Jenny Rathbone:** Yes. The Minister on 8 July announced the RDP, and I believe that the total budget was £935 million. Could you just give a breakdown on where that £935 million is coming from, because I am aware that 15% is coming from top-slicing pillar 1 into pillar 2?

[191] **Rebecca Evans:** It is 15%, as you say, from pillar 1 into pillar 2, £400 million from the Welsh Government, and the remainder then from the European Commission.

[192] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, the money from the European Commission, unless it has serious disagreements with what you have submitted, is a definite sum of money.

[193] **Rebecca Evans:** This is the sum of money that we expect to receive.

[194] **Mr Slade:** Yes. It is in the order of £310 million at current prices.

[195] **Jenny Rathbone:** Fine. Okay.

[196] **Rebecca Evans:** The debate and the discussion or negotiation will be about the relative split of that funding into those four different central blocks.

[197] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you for that clarification. I know that you are going to make a statement about moorland, but do you still have the altitude classification for moorland?

[198] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes. It is at 400m.

[199] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, that has not changed in the way you—

[200] **Rebecca Evans:** No. The building blocks for moorland start at 400m, using the 1992 map. However, following representations that I had from the industry over the summer, it was

very clear that it was unhappy with the proposed definition of moorland in terms of the species or in terms of the improved land approach that we originally had. The industry was much more keen to adopt a definition similar to that used by DEFRA, which is based on a list of species that are usually found in moorland—bracken, heathers, wavy hair-grass and others. There is a list of them that has been sent to all farmers now.

[201] The decision to change the definition of moorland does not compromise the integrity of the scheme in any way and we do have an appeals review process in place for farmers who wish to challenge the categorisation of their farm holdings.

[202] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, that is great. On the £95 million that you propose to dedicate to LEADER and the rural community development fund—and I have been very, very impressed with the outcomes of the current programme—I wonder whether you could tell us what you are doing to ensure that those who need to know are aware of the achievements from the LEADER and rural community development fund, so that they can learn from success, rather than reinventing the wheel.

[203] **Rebecca Evans:** It is important that we do recognise success when we see it and that we do not necessarily have to go back to the drawing board for every scheme just because we have a new rural development programme. We should be learning from and continuing those things that have worked, but then taking a look at things that perhaps have not been so successful.

[204] I have a bit of new information for the committee. I can announce that I have commissioned an independent review of Farming Connect. That is part of our approach to delivering the knowledge transfer advice and information part of the RDP. I have asked Gareth Williams, who you will know is the author of ‘Working Smarter’, to undertake that review. It will help to ensure that the interventions under the next round of funding are effective with regard to Farming Connect’s role and objectives and help us to get the maximum value out of it. He will report on the proposed model that we have and the allocation of funds for the successor to Farming Connect and its proportionality to the rest of the programme. So, he will look at those four blocks to see whether he would recommend any changes. He will, obviously, draw on the previous work of the Wales Rural Observatory, the RDP advisory group, ‘Working Smarter’, and consider what evidence is already available. I know that he has a series of consultation meetings planned and, if necessary, he will make proposals for an alternative approach.

[205] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Thank you. Can we keep our questions succinct now—and the answers, please? Julie Morgan is next on animal welfare.

[206] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you very much. I want to ask about the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, which is now in force and gives new responsibilities about dogs to local authorities to implement. Obviously, it does not include some of the measures that were in the original Wales proposals for the control of dogs. I wonder what comments you have on that gap in provision that exists because we did not continue with our original proposals.

[207] **Rebecca Evans:** I am aware that the previous Minister announced that he would be taking up RSPCA Cymru’s offer to undertake a review of responsible dog ownership in Wales. I am also aware that that piece of work has not yet started. I think that some terms of reference for that report have been drawn up. I also know that Dogs Trust Cymru is also keen to support that piece of work, so my proposed way forward would be to meet with both organisations to see how we can take that piece of work forward. I think it could be an exciting piece of work, engaging with local authorities, with children, dog owners and third sector organisations. I would be keen to have Members’ input into that piece of work as well.

[208] **Julie Morgan:** Would you be able to extend the bodies involved to include other organisations that were interested and promoted dogs' welfare? When we were doing the Welsh Bill, we had a wide coalition of organisations that were supporting it, where dog control notices were what they really wanted and what we were campaigning for. Would it be possible to include that wide group in this consultation?

[209] **Rebecca Evans:** I will certainly consider that. I would also wish to have the Wales animal health and welfare group look at this. You might be aware that, over the course of the Royal Welsh Show, I launched the animal health and welfare framework for Wales. That framework is supported by a group of six experts from across different fields, chaired by Peredur Hughes. They will advise Government on animal welfare policy. So, I will certainly have that group involved as well.

[210] **Julie Morgan:** One of the main campaigning organisations was the Communication Workers Union, trying to look after the postwomen and postmen. Would it be possible to involve it in something as well?

[211] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes, I would be keen to meet with it, because I know that it has been very strong on this campaign in the past. So, that would be welcome.

[212] **Julie Morgan:** Do you think that there would be the possibility of looking again at dog control notices at some point if the existing legislation from Westminster and the work that you will do in terms of education does not fill that gap of stepping in before an Act actually takes place in terms of dangerous dogs?

[213] **Rebecca Evans:** I will certainly keep that under review if our proposed way forward does not deliver what we would like to see it deliver.

[214] **Julie Morgan:** Thank you. I have just another very quick question. When will the regulations on the compulsory microchipping of dogs and the regulation on breeding establishments come in?

[215] **Rebecca Evans:** You know that the regulations on the identification of dogs, the microchipping regulations, were due to come into force on 6 August. They were to be debated on 15 July, but that was delayed until after the summer recess, which is the reason why I had to withdraw them before recess. Over the summer, my officials and I have been looking at the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee report, which raised some concerns about the specifics on microchipping. I have issued a letter to all Members, which you will have seen, advising you of that. I just want to put the committee's mind at rest that I am committed to bringing in both sets of regulations as soon as I can. I am also keen to make sure that we can all support them as an Assembly. So, I do need to iron out those important concerns that the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee has raised. It is a priority for me and for the Welsh Government to bring these regulations into force.

[216] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I ask for succinct questions and answers. William Powell is first, and then Mick Antoniw.

[217] **William Powell:** Diolch yn fawr, **William Powell:** Thank you, Chair. Gadeirydd.

[218] Good morning, Deputy Minister. Congratulations on your recent confirmation and appointment. I have a couple of questions regarding a very important topic indeed for all of us, which is the future of the industry. May I ask specifically whether the Welsh Government has yet received the report from Professor Wynne Jones, former principal of Harper Adams

University, which was commissioned by your predecessor, Alun Davies, and Ken Skates as Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology, looking at the future needs and delivery of agricultural skills going forward?

[219] **Rebecca Evans:** No, I have not received that report yet. I understand that it was commissioned in February of this year. I understand that it is being compiled on addressing these future challenges and opportunities, and it will provide a set of recommendations to address any gaps in capacity that we have in further education. I understand that the report has taken a little longer than hoped because of Professor Wynne Jones's own personal commitments outside of this piece of work, and also because the piece of work was larger than expected. However, I do expect to receive it by November of this year.

[220] **William Powell:** Thank you. We look forward very keenly to receiving the findings of that. Linked to that, do we have the findings of the Malcolm Thomas review into the important and well-regarded young entrants support scheme because, again, that links in very closely with this topic? What is the Welsh Government proposing to do with those findings?

12:15

[221] **Rebecca Evans:** Yes, I have received that report. The proposal there will be to publish the report alongside an action plan to show how we intend to help young people into farming. I hope to do that later on this autumn. I will just take this opportunity to say that, over the summer, I have had many good conversations and visits with young farmers. I have been really enthused by their sheer passion for embracing change within the industry. So, I think that, thinking of the young people we have met, we do have a bright future for farming.

[222] **William Powell:** Thank you. Diolch yn fawr.

[223] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mick Antoniwi is next.

[224] **Mick Antoniwi:** We all obviously welcome the Royal Assent given to the Agricultural Sector (Wales) Bill, which is now an Act. It is now almost two years since the cessation of any discussion of increases and so on for agricultural workers. Bearing in mind that it may take some time yet for you to consider the consultation and put in place a new regime, will you consider some form of interim measure that will increase agricultural workers' wages at least by the cost of living since the date of the last Order?

[225] **Rebecca Evans:** I thank Mick Antoniwi for that question. I should really place on record my thanks for all the work you did championing this issue through the Assembly. You are right that there has not been a pay increase for farm workers who have their pay set by the Order since 2012. You will know that I have launched a 12-week public consultation on this. The next step will obviously be to look at those consultation responses in terms of setting up the panel. That will have to be set up through a public appointments process, and that will have to go through the Assembly. Then, the Order itself will have to go through the Assembly. So, I am very, very conscious of the changes in the minimum wage and so on and the fact that there has not been a pay rise for farm workers for quite some time. So, I am very conscious of this, particularly in terms of the way in which we wish to support low-paid workers. The Act does give Welsh Ministers the opportunity to create an Order before the panel comes into force, and that is something that I am actively looking at at the moment. I hope to update you further in due course.

[226] **Alun Ffred Jones:** So, what is the timetable for that?

[227] **Rebecca Evans:** Well, I am currently looking at whether or not I will make an Order. However, as I say, getting the panel in place will take quite some time because we are only at

the consultation stage at the moment. It will be the end of October by the time the consultation is closed. I have to consider the consultation responses, create the panel through the Assembly, appoint the panel through a public appointments process, and then the panel will have to create the Order, which will also have to go through the Assembly. So, for the panel to be in place creating the Order will take some time, whereas, under the Act, Welsh Ministers are able to create an Order in the interim.

[228] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mick, are you happy?

[229] **Mick Antoniw:** I am happy with that. She is considering an Order.

[230] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Russell George is next.

[231] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. May I ask when you will be announcing the outcomes of the EIDCymru consultation?

[232] **Rebecca Evans:** I will be making a written statement on the consultation during October. That will include a timescale for delivery.

[233] **Russell George:** May I also ask, as a result of changes in England, what cross-border issues you think are relevant?

[234] **Rebecca Evans:** I know that officials meet regularly with their counterparts in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Perhaps I can ask Andrew to update you on any recent discussions.

[235] **Russell George:** Yes, please.

[236] **Mr Slade:** As you say, Deputy Minister, we are in regular contact with colleagues across the border and indeed, for that matter, in other parts of the UK. The next meeting of officials that will address this issue is at the end of this month on 30 September.

[237] **Russell George:** Which issues do you think are potentially problematic?

[238] **Mr Slade:** It is mainly, or at least in the large part, about ensuring that people out there understand the differences and what is involved. It is going to be part of keeping our communications with the industry up to date. If there are issues that come up that we can flag up for our farmers, we will do that, either through *Gwlad* or other means or in our annual notification at the end of the year.

[239] **Russell George:** What are the issues that the unions have raised with you with regard to the potential cross-border issues?

[240] **Mr Slade:** They have raised a number of things. In particular, the slaughter derogation in England is probably the thing of greatest concern to them, at least in terms of the communications they have had with me. We are actively involved in talking to the unions and colleagues across the border about how we manage these different impacts.

[241] **Russell George:** That is fine. Finally, with regard to the changes, how are you informing Welsh farmers of the changes that are happening in England and how they are going to affect them?

[242] **Mr Slade:** That is my point about using *Gwlad*, our regular magazine, and using our regular e-updates to farmers, and the inventory form that we put out in December—the latest state of play will be put out to all relevant livestock keepers with that communication.

[243] **Rebecca Evans:** Chair, while we are still on the subject of sheep movement, there is some more new information for the committee, which is the announcement today of funding of nearly £1 million to help sheep farmers improve their IT skills and business performance. That will help them adapt to new technologies to enjoy the practical benefits of electronic reading. I will be making a press statement on this; 1,500 farmers will be able to benefit from this announcement today. This particular project was developed hand-in-hand with the industry and it will be using RDP funding. I suppose that this is the way in which I would like to see the development of future projects as well.

[244] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Diolch yn fawr **Alun Ffred Jones:** Thank you very much for am yr wybodaeth honno. Llyr Gruffydd sydd nesaf. that information. Llyr Gruffydd is next.

[245] **Llyr Gruffydd:** Thank you very much for the announcement, which is very welcome. I want to go back to CAP and the fact that the greening requirements are becoming clearer now. Your predecessor gave a cast-iron guarantee, I would say, that farmers within Glastir who wish to withdraw from Glastir, following or as a result of the greening changes becoming more evident, would be allowed to do so without penalty. Is that a guarantee that you can reiterate and give again?

[246] **Rebecca Evans:** Chair, this is something that I will have to consider. I will write to the committee, if that is possible.

[247] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Okay. Antoinette is next.

[248] **Antoinette Sandbach:** I wanted to go to the pollinator action plan. In July 2013, you published the final draft of the action plan for pollinators. It indicated that the draft implementation plan would be developed into a working plan by winter 2013, that the task and finish group would produce best practice guidance for land management by spring 2014 and that there would be a communications plan. So, where are we on those?

[249] **Rebecca Evans:** The pollinator action plan comes under the portfolio of the Minister for Natural Resources rather than mine. He has responsibility for the action plan under his portfolio, whereas I have responsibility for farmed bees and bee health.

[250] **Antoinette Sandbach:** So, in terms of communicating to land managers, are you saying that that is for the Minister for Natural Resources rather than you?

[251] **Rebecca Evans:** The action plan itself comes under the Minister for Natural Resources, but, clearly, I will have to have a discussion on this particular point with him.

[252] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I think that there are a few questions. I call Joyce to begin with, then Jeff.

[253] **Joyce Watson:** My question is a short one. Deputy Minister, could you please give your view on the role of intensive agriculture in Wales? You will know that it can be controversial and that there has been controversy in relation to large-scale dairy farms.

[254] **Rebecca Evans:** I am very familiar with how controversial intensive farming can be. Wales is actually well placed for extensive grass-based agriculture, and I know that there is particular interest. What matters, I think, is animal health and welfare and the quality of the animal husbandry taking place that is important. That is not actually dictated by size. All farms regardless of size are subject to the same rules and regulations regarding animal health and welfare. Those include, for example, stocking density regulations, EU requirements and

the same kind of on-the-spot scrutiny that they receive as part of their regular inspection regimes. From a farmer's perspective, healthy animals are productive animals, so it is certainly in every farmer's best interest to ensure the good health and welfare of all their animals.

[255] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Very quickly, to build on the point that William Powell made about training. When I visited the Royal Welsh Show this year and spoke to members of the young farmers club, I learned that they were very concerned about the future in terms of skill levels. They told me that when they could find courses in FE colleges, very often they were on redundant skills, so they were keen that modern skills are taught. Can you give an assurance that, together with the new Deputy Minister for skills, you will work with Lantra to make sure that is what is offered by way of training is relevant and up to date?

[256] **Rebecca Evans:** I absolutely give that assurance and I look forward to working with the new Deputy Minister on this as well. At the Royal Welsh Show, I met with Lantra, and I was pleased, at its stand, to launch the Agri-Academy for 16-year-olds. That was a really positive experience. There were young people who are completely enthused about farming, with great ideas and a willingness to embrace change and the farming skills that we need for the future and not the farming skills that we have needed in the past. We know that things are changing fast, and we need to be ready to embrace those changes.

[257] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I call on William and then Russell.

[258] **William Powell:** Diolch, Gadeirydd. My question relates to the future of the organic sector, Deputy Minister. Last year, the European Commission published some proposals around the regulation of the organic sector, and I would be very interested as to your views on the impacts that they could have on the sector in Wales. I was also at the Royal Welsh Show this year and had a number of conversations with people within the meat sector who are very concerned indeed about the recent exodus from organic production that has been evident over the last six to 12 months. I wonder whether you would be prepared to comment on that or look into that issue further and then share your views with committee.

[259] **Rebecca Evans:** I will certainly look into the second issue that you referred to, namely the exodus of people from the organic farming industry. However, with regard to the EU proposals, my understanding is that they are very much proposals that are in their early stage at the moment and that my officials will be working with DEFRA to ensure that we get the best deal for Welsh organic farmers. There are some parts of the proposals that give us cause for concern, such as the fact that feed produced for organic animals would need to be 60% to 90% organic. That is quite high. However, there are other aspects that would be less concerning for us, for example a move to risk-based inspections, which would mean that good organic farms would be less encumbered by regular inspections. So, there are positives and negatives that we are looking at. However, as I say, it is early days for those proposals, but we are engaged with them.

[260] **William Powell:** Thank you very much, Deputy Minister.

[261] **Russell George:** Can you outline your views as to how you intend to support the dairy industry, following the decline in milk prices?

[262] **Rebecca Evans:** Two minutes for dairy, Chair; that is going to be—

[263] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Challenging.

[264] **Rebecca Evans:** Quite a challenge, yes. Basically, my work on dairy involves working very closely with the dairy taskforce in Wales. I met with it first at the Royal Welsh

Show. I am more than aware of the challenges facing the dairy industry at the moment. My approach would be to use the rural development plan, going forward, as a way to support the industry to develop and to ensure that we have supply chains that are beneficial to the dairy industry in Wales. I would be happy to write to you more fully on this, Chair, because it is a big subject.

[265] **Alun Ffred Jones:** No doubt we will return to this at a future date.

[266] May I thank you for your presence this morning and for answering questions? Obviously, it was only a quick canter through things and we will return in greater detail to some of these issues during the course of the year.

[267] Diolch yn fawr iawn i chi a diolch i'r Thank you very much and thank you to your officials as well.
swyddogion hefyd.

12:29

Papurau i'w Nodi **Papers to Note**

[268] **Alun Ffred Jones:** There is just one other item. There are six papers to note. Are you content to note them? I see that you are. That means that this is the conclusion of this committee meeting, and will meet again on 25 September. Diolch yn fawr iawn.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12:29.
The meeting ended at 12:29.