Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru | Wales Environment Link

Lesley Griffiths MS
Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd
Welsh Government
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

25 October | 2022

Cc: Julie James, Minister for Climate Change

Dear Minister,

National Minimum Standards

Wales Environment Link welcomes the introduction of the Agriculture (Wales) Bill and would very much welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss ways to strengthen the Bill as it passes through the Senedd. One particular concern that our members have, is the delay to the introduction of a framework for setting National Minimum Standards.

As stated in our recent briefing on National Minimum Standards, there is a risk that delaying their introduction could result in there not being a clear regulatory baseline to underpin the Sustainable Farming Scheme from the start. If National Minimum Standards are introduced after the launch of the Scheme in 2025, this will cause confusion for farmers. We would appreciate further information on the timetable for further consultation on National Minimum Standards and when the required legislation is planned to be laid.

Agricultural Pollution

We have noted with interest your announcement on a consultation relating to the possible re-introduction of a derogation on nitrogen spreading, following recommendations from the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee report on the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations. We wrote to you in the summer regarding this derogation and, whilst the delay in introducing

the 170kg/h spreading limit gives our members cause for concern, we also see potential in using a licensing scheme to address this issue.

We will be responding to the consultation with a more detailed view, but we strongly feel that the consultation should cover the following question areas:

- Whether there should also be a requirement to carry out Environmental Impact and Habitats Regulations (EIA/HRA) Assessments where SAC and SPA catchments are affected.
- How crop need should be defined, and the need to include phosphate as well as nitrate.
- Inclusion of a requirement for full regulatory compliance to receive a licence.
- How cumulative impacts of derogations will be taken into account.
- Monitoring requirements to ensure licence conditions are being met.

Linked to this, we are pleased that WEL's representative on the Wales Land Management Forum Agricultural Pollution Sub-Group was able to chair the group that produced the Alternative Measures report, which made recommendations to strengthen the regulations. WEL did not add its logo to the report, as our members' views on the recommendations relating to use of new technology and the derogation were mixed. We only use the WEL logo where there is a clear consensus on all recommendations. Nonetheless, we welcome this report and believe there are many recommendations within it that could improve and strengthen the regulations if they were taken forward.

Yours sincerely,

Arfon Williams

Andrew Tuddenham

Co-Chairs, WEL Land Use Working Group

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