

Memorandum on the Rural Affairs
Draft Budget Proposals for 2024-25

Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee – 18 January 2024

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This paper provides information to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee on the Rural Affairs (RA) (MEG) proposals outlined in Draft Budget 2024-25, published on 19 December. It also provides an update on specific areas of interest to the Committee. The summary of the budget structure can be found at Annex A of the evidence paper.

2. Summary of Budget Changes

1.2 The table below provides an overview of the plans summarised at a high level by business area for the Rural Affairs MEG published in the Draft Budget 2024-25.

The total resource budget is summarised in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: Overview of the Resource Budget							
	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024- 25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Revenue							
Agriculture, Food & Fisheries	354,215	376,215	22,000	6%	303,275	(72,940)	-19%
Protect and Improve Animal Health & Welfare	41,499	41,499	0	0%	41,499	0	0%
Rural Affairs Monitoring and EU Exit Strategy	3,389	3,389	0	0%	2,639	(750)	-22%
Environment, Wildlife Management and Community Green Spaces	1,586	1,586	0	0%	1,586	0	0%
Sub Total	400,689	422,689	22,000	5%	348,999	(73,690)	-17%
Non Cash							
Agriculture, Food & Fisheries	10,817	10,817	0	0%	10,817	0	0%
Sub Total	10,817	10,817	0	0%	10,817	0	0%
TOTAL	411,506	433,506	22,000	5%	359,816	73,690	-17%

Resource

In 2024-25 the Revenue budget reduces by £51.7m against the 23-24 Restated Final Budget. A Welsh Government wide reprioritisation exercise led by the Minister for Finance and Local Government took place to target allocations to protect frontline public services, Programme for Government and help those effected by the Cost of Living Crisis. This is partly off-set by an increase in Capital budget of £23m to re-align activity across the rural investment schemes.

Capital

The capital budget allocation of £60.0m, an increase of £22.8m for 2024-25, is set out in Table 2 as follows:

The total capital budget is summarised in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2: Overview of the Capital Budget							
	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024- 25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
General Capital							
Agriculture, Food & Fisheries	37,200	37,000	(200)	-1%	60,000	23,000	62%
TOTAL	37,200	37,000	(200)	-1%	60,000	23,000	62%

- 1.3 A breakdown of the RA MEG by spending area, action and BEL for 2024-25 and future years is provided at Annex A. A transparent narrative explanation has been provided to explain increases and reductions, where not covered in the evidence paper. This only covers the budgets that are been securitised as part of this committee.

2.0 Monitoring of budgets

- 2.1 All budgets continue to be monitored and challenged on a monthly basis during 2023-24, to consider the latest forecasts and budget movements as necessary. I receive regular financial updates on the forecasts for the MEG to ensure that budgets remain on track to deliver my priorities. We maintain very close monitoring to ensure funding is being invested where best needed whilst supporting our priorities.

3.0 Evidence base for budget decisions.

- 3.1 The Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023 has established the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) framework to underpin all future agricultural support (other than BPS throughout the Transition Period 2025-2029). The SLM framework comprises four SLM objectives: 1) To support the Sustainable Production of Food and other Goods, 2) to mitigate and adapt to climate change, 3) to maintain and enhance the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits they provide, and 4) to conserve and enhance the countryside and cultural resources and promote public access to and engagement with them, and to sustain the Welsh language and promote and facilitate its use. These four objectives are not hierarchical and must be considered together.
- 3.2 The SLM Duty included in the Act obliges Welsh Ministers to consider how future support 'best contributes' to meeting the SLM objectives.
- 3.3 In adopting Sustainable Land Management as the framework, future agricultural support and regulation in Wales will be consistent with Welsh Government's obligations under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, helping to contribute to the well-being goals under section 4 of that Act, and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- 3.4 The Act now enables us to bring forwards new support mechanisms such as the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) due to launch in 2025.
- 3.5 We are committed to delivering a strategic approach to Fisheries, working with stakeholders. A clear focus will be on delivery of sustainable fisheries, managed in an adaptive way, for which we have budget allocated for in the financial year. I intend to work with stakeholders to establish the priorities for delivery.
- 3.6 A key enabler will be the underpinning of our strategic approach by a clear plan for investment in our seafood sector, and crucial to this investment will be the support we provide through a replacement to the EMFF scheme via the Welsh Marine and Fisheries Scheme. This scheme will enable Welsh Ministers to support the sustainable growth of the marine economy whilst protecting and enhancing the marine environment.

4.0 Impact of Cost of living on budget allocations and programmes

This Draft Budget has been prepared in line with our priorities to:

- Protect core, frontline public services as far as possible.
- Deliver the greatest benefit to households which are hardest hit.
- Prioritise jobs, wherever possible.
- Work in partnership with other public sector bodies to face this financial storm together.
- Re-focus funding away from non-devolved areas, which the UK Government should be funding.

4.1 **In this context supporting households with the cost-of-living pressures remains a priority for the Welsh Government**

4.2 I recognise that impact the cost of living crisis is having in Wales and the Welsh Government has worked hard with our 2024-25 draft budget proposals to protect as much as possible the most vulnerable in society from its impacts. This is particularly true of rural communities who often have higher commuting and energy costs to those living in urban communities.

4.3 I have protected the BPS budget at £238m for 2024, the same level as 2023, as we had planned to do. As the transition to life outside the EU – and beyond BPS – continues, we are asking the agriculture sector to undergo a significant change to support the delivery of our sustainable land management objectives.

5.0 Lasting implications of the pandemic

The whole food chain continues to struggle to fill job vacancies, from seasonal labour requirements previously filled with migrant workers, in agriculture and food manufacturing to permanent vacancies at all skill levels across food manufacturing and hospitality sectors. Food manufacturers have consolidated product ranges and shortened working weeks in response to the labour crisis. The UK has a significant problem where large numbers in the 50+ age group left the workforce during Covid and are unwilling to return.

6.0 Impact on Deprivation and Poverty

6.1 Over this spending review period (including 22-23, 23-24 and 24-25) I am making significant funding available to support the resilience of the rural economy and our natural environment and have already announced over £200m worth of rural schemes. This funding provides vital support for our primary production and food sectors which have, and continue to be, affected by the impacts of Covid, the UK's withdrawal from the European Union and the rising cost of living.

7.0 Withdrawal from the European Union

7.1 The UK's exit from the European Union continues to impact on Wales, resulting in critical new areas of work for the Welsh Government. Some were expected, such as preparing our borders, however, the impact of other changes has still to be determined. For example, the UK Government's approach to reforming legislation under the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 is likely to require a significant effort across the portfolio. We need to continue to adapt to this evolving context and respond to a completely new way of working for Wales in terms of our role in the UK and our engagement with the EU and other trading nations. This requires the maintenance of effective inter-government communications. For example, the Minister for Climate Change and I are part of a formal Inter-Ministerial group with UK Government (Defra), Scottish Government

and Northern Ireland Executive, in which we now have to agree how we work together to further policy where powers have flowed back from the EU.

7.2 This work is supported by a series of common frameworks which are undergoing scrutiny by relevant committees. These set arrangements for how we come together across the UK in subject areas. Furthermore, the machinery of the EU TCA is still evolving and requiring us to think differently about how we respond, in the same way as we need to understand the impact of an evolving trading environment, not only in terms of the EU TCA but also the impact of emerging free trade agreements with other nations.

8.0 Programme for Government 2021-2026 / The Labour-Plaid Co-operation Agreement: An explanation of how the budget allocations within your portfolio align to Programme for Government and The Labour-Plaid Co-operation Agreement commitments and priorities.

The budget allocations for the Rural Affairs MEG ensures that it prioritises my Programme for Government commitments, not only in the Rural Affairs portfolio but across Government. For example, many of the Climate Change specific Programme for Government commitments are supported by investment from the RA MEG. For example, the Nutrient Management Investment scheme is supporting investments which enhance on-farm nutrient management, protect, and enhance water, soil and air quality, improve on-farm resource efficiencies, technical performance, and the use of technology to improve management decisions.

The Community Food Strategy has the potential to deliver many benefits which advance the Future Generations Well-being goals. While 'food' is the common factor, the societal benefits could be wide ranging. The Welsh Government's strategy will be to enable and encourage stakeholders and partners to play a full part in improving the focus on food matters, and planning and delivery across public bodies and public services boards where food is relevant. The Community Food Strategy will be an enabling framework for this, where we will look to our partners to play a full role in working with us and others. The strategy will not be a delivery or action plan. Welsh Government will be looking to maximise the impact of existing resources, how they are purposed and what outcomes they can generate, rather than providing additional financial resources. Structures to advance community food are already in place, with Welsh Government having pump primed Local Food Partnerships through a one-off grant to establish them across Wales.

8.1 How the Rural Affairs budget allocations address the Welsh Government's commitment to respond to the climate and nature emergencies across all policy areas.

8.2 The SLM Duty included in the Agriculture (Wales) Act obliges Welsh Ministers to consider how future support 'best contributes' to meeting the SLM objectives, which includes to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- 8.3 The Sustainable Farming Scheme, which is being introduced through powers in the Act is being designed within the context of all four SLM objectives.
- 8.4 The Land Management Reform Division is responsible for designing the Sustainable Farming Scheme by liaising across Climate Change and Rural Affairs to bring together multiple policy commitments.
- 8.5 The SLM objectives are broken down further into 15 SLM outcomes, referred to as the 'Purposes' in the Act – such as improving the resilience of agricultural businesses, improving air quality and maximising carbon sequestration and storage.
- 8.6 The SFS will contain a suite of actions which will deliver against the SLM Objectives including Actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change
- 8.7 Our programme of change includes the design of evidence based policy, the development of the underpinning legislative framework and all aspects of stakeholder engagement and business change within the agricultural industry.
- 8.8 The significant funding of over £200m is supporting our farmers, foresters, land managers and food businesses to promote the sustainable production of food and support the rural economy on the path to a net zero, nature positive Wales. Funding includes a focus on woodland and forestry, on farm environmental improvements, sustainable land management, productivity and diversification. We are also targeting landscape scale land management and food and farming supply chains.

9.0 Preventative Spend

- 9.1 These budget proposals reflect my continuing commitment to protect and prioritise investment that supports preventative measures as far as possible. Value for money and clarity over how we use our resources effectively is central to delivering our priorities. Once expenditure is planned in line with priorities, we have well-established processes in place to ensure that resources are used effectively for the purposes intended.
- 9.2 Funding allocated to rural schemes is all preventative – targeting agri-environment improvements through the Habitat Wales Scheme; improved productivity and viability of businesses through BPS and targeted investment grants, the creation and restoration of woodland; and many other schemes being delivered. The Food Business Accelerator Scheme offers capital grants to support sustainable growth in food manufacturing and productivity improvements, while the Sustainable Innovation Scheme offers a range of revenue based support and expertise to advance innovation and accreditation standards in the food manufacturing sector.

- 9.3 RDP and replacement capital funding programmes are designed in such a way to promote sustainable practices and drive reduction in carbon emissions (and therefore work to prevent the impact of climate change). For example, through the Growing for the Environment scheme supports the growing and utilisation of crops, which can result in improvements in the environmental performance of a farm business. The scheme objectives are to support farmers to reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate change and build greater resilience into farm businesses, improve water quality and reduce flood risks, and contribute towards a reversal in the decline of Wales' native biodiversity.
- 9.4 Rural schemes are informed by departmental strategies and policies, which have taken into account the WFGA ways of working, including preventative approaches and contribute to the Sustainable Land Management objectives established by the Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023.
- 9.5 During 2023/24 I have opened Expression of Interest windows for a range of rural schemes. These include the Small Grants – Yard Coverings scheme, for which I opened a window in November 2023. This capital scheme is designed to support farmers in Wales to improve on-farm nutrient management by investing in existing in farm infrastructure. Support is provided to separate rainwater and slurry from areas such as livestock feeding and gathering areas, manure storage areas and slurry/silage stores. The objectives are to increase on-farm investment, increase technical performance, increase on-farm production efficiencies and increase on-farm resource efficiencies. In January 2024 I will launch window 6 (of 8 in total) of the Small Grants – Environment scheme which is providing a maximum of £7,500 funding per window for Capital Works Projects. Set lists of Capital Works are available to support the delivery of beneficial environmental outcomes under the themes of carbon, water, and landscape and pollinators.

10.0 Well-being of Future Generations Act

- 10.1 My draft budget preparations shows how I have sought to reflect the framework of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Sustainable Land Management objectives in the Agriculture (Wales) Act in setting our spending priorities . We reviewed current trends and future projections and their potential impacts in the short, medium and longer term. We did this to ensure, as far as possible, that short term responses do not have longer term detrimental impacts.
- 10.2 All funding for rural development will need to align with the Sustainable Land Management objectives and our priorities for the sustainable management of natural resources . These priorities are framed around the ways that natural resources can support our well-being goals and address

both the risks to the environment and the social and economic benefits they provide.

11.0 Impact Assessments

11.1 After reviewing the key changes above, a number of key programmes were subject to Integrated Impact Assessments covering equality, Welsh language and Children's Rights. Integrated impact assessments are mainstreamed into policy setting as well as budgetary decisions.

11.2 The results from the impact assessments show that there are no disproportionate impacts on the identified groups due to these budgetary decisions. A further assessment will be made prior to Final Budget.

12.0 Equality, Welsh language and children's rights assessment

12.1 The results from the impact assessments show that there are no disproportionate impacts on the identified groups due to these budgetary decisions.

12.2 Wales is the first country in the UK, and one of only a few countries in the world, to enshrine the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into domestic law with the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.

The duties within the Measure are implemented in two stages and place duties on Welsh Ministers to give balanced consideration to the rights in the UNCRC and its optional protocols when formulating or reviewing policy and legislation; and when they use all their legal powers or duties.

12.3 Across my portfolio, each member of staff is required to consider how their work affects children's rights, and this process has informed the Integrated Impact Assessment. No significant impacts on children's rights have been identified in the setting of this budget.

13.0 Strategic Context – specific areas of interest.

13.1 The development and implementation of agricultural policy including the proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme for Wales.

13.2 The budget allocation of £500K will be sufficient in 2024/25 to fund the ongoing policy development of the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

13.3 This budget has been allocated to funding ongoing evidence packages to support policy development and fund potential preparatory actions as we move closer to 2025 and the launch of the Sustainable Farming Scheme. This budget allocation will also fund the analysis of the consultation on the proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme and continued engagement with

stakeholders and the farming community to facilitate the behavioural shifts needed to adapt farming practices on a national scale.

13.4 Rural Payments Wales have been enhancing and developing its IT and online platform in preparation for SFS. A budget allocation of £6m Capital and £3.7m Revenue will allow ongoing system maintenance and developments to introduce the SFS in parallel with the phasing out of BPS from 2025.

13.5 The development of fisheries policy, including the delivery of a Joint Fisheries Statement and Fisheries Management Plans.

13.6 Development of Fisheries Policy and Fisheries Management Plans in line with the timelines set out in the UK Joint Fisheries Statement linked to the UK Fisheries Act 2020.

13.7 **Bovine TB eradication.**

13.8 The TB Eradication Programme sets out the Welsh Government's long term vision for the eradication of bovine TB in Wales. The programme is based on the four key principles of infectious disease control: Keep it Out, Find it Fast, Stop it Spreading and Stamp it Out. We have seen good progress since our programme was first established, with long term decreases in incidence and prevalence. Between 2009 and 2022, there was a 49% decrease in new incidents, while 94.7% of herds in Wales were TB free at end of June 2023.

13.9 As part of its *Programme for Government 2021 - 26* commitments the Welsh Government continues to prohibit the culling of badgers as part of the TB Eradication Programme. Funds continue to be made available to support private vaccination schemes across Wales, whilst assessing the most appropriate, cost-effective deployment of the Badger BCG vaccine as a protective measure.

13.10 A regionalised approach to TB eradication was launched in 2017 creating Low, Intermediate and High TB Areas and policies have continued to be refined, reacting dynamically to the changing disease picture.

13.11 Following consultation, the Minister announced a new 5-year delivery plan for the TB Eradication Programme in March 2023.

13.12 **TB statistics latest position**

13.13 These are the latest published statistics for the twelve months to the end of March 2023 (other figures quoted by MSs may be out of date). These figures were published on the 13 September 2023. The next release of TB statistics will be published on 13 December 2023.

13.14 Bovine TB statistics for Wales to June 2023 (latest month of published data):

13.15 94.7% of herds were TB free at end of June 2023.

13.16 Long-term falls in TB indicators:

- New incidents have decreased from **1,185** in 2009 to **609** in the 12 months to June 2023, representing a **48.6% decrease** in new incidents.
- Animals slaughtered for TB control has decreased from **11,655** in 2009 to **9,529** in the 12 months to June 2023, representing an **18.2% decrease**.
- On 30 June 2023, there were **898** herds under restrictions, compared to the peak of **2,268** herds under restriction on 31 March 2009. This represents a **60.4% decrease**.
- On 30 June 2023, there were **608** non-Officially TB free herds, compared to the peak of **1,066** on 30 April 2009. This represents a **43.0% decrease**.
- Herd prevalence has decreased from the peak in April 2009 at **7.8%** to **5.3%** in June 2023.

13.17 Medium-term trends:

- In the 12 months to June 2023, new incidents decreased to **609** from **746** for the same period to June 2018, representing an **18.4% decrease**.
- In the 12 months to June 2023, animals slaughtered for TB control decreased to **9,529** from **10,024** for the same period to June 2018, representing a **4.9% decrease**.
- On the 30 June 2023 there were **898** herds under restriction, compared with **857** herds under restriction on 30 June 2018. This represents a **4.8% increase**.
- On the 30 June 2023 there were **608** non-Officially TB free herds, compared with **623** on 30 June 2018. This represents a **2.4% decrease**.
- Herd prevalence has **increased** from **5.2%** on 30 June 2018 to **5.3%** on 30 June 2023.

13.18 Short-term trends:

- In the 12 months to June 2023, new incidents decreased to **609** from **649** for the same period in the previous year, representing a **6.2% decrease**.
- In the 12 months to June 2023, animals slaughtered for TB control decreased to **9,529** from **9,700** for the same period in the previous year, representing a **1.8% decrease**.
- On the 30 June 2023 there were **898** herds under restriction, compared with **927** herds under restriction on 30 June 2022. This represents a **3.1% decrease**.
- On the 30 June 2023 there were **608** non-Officially TB Free herds, compared with **601** on 30 June 2022. This represents a **1.2% increase**.
- Herd prevalence has **increased** from **5.2%** on 30 June 2022 to **5.3%** on 30 June 2023.

14.0 Avian Flu

14.1 Since 1 October 2023 we have moved into the 2023/24 administrative outbreak period for avian influenza. As of 30 November, there have been 4 outbreaks during this new 2023/24 period (2 in England and 2 in Scotland). There were 208 UK cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) confirmed in poultry and captive birds in the 2022/2023 administrative outbreak which covered October 2022 through to September 2023, placing significant resourcing and funding pressures on APHA and increasing the unfunded pressure against this budget.

14.2 At the time of writing, the epidemic is continuing and the risk of infection to poultry is maintained at low while the risk level for wild birds is maintained at high. Wild migratory birds will continue to arrive to GB until mid-December and January, and the increase in wild bird biomass will increase potential infection pressure on captive birds, meaning the risk levels for these two groups are likely to change. While cases to date have been lower than in the 2022/23 outbreak, accurate forecasting as to the number of infected premises and birds for the coming months cannot be predicted. Ongoing wild bird migration until January may add additional.

14.3 Continued effective management of avian influenza cases in kept poultry is very important to reduce the direct and indirect impact on the poultry industry and reduce the likelihood of virus evolving and posing a greater threat to human health.

15.0 TB Testing

15.1 In Wales a skin test (*SICCT*) to the neck of cattle is used to identify infected animals. This compares the reactions to the injection of both bovine and avian tuberculin. In general animals that react to the bovine more than the avian tuberculin are considered as skin test reactors.

15.2 This is a long established test and is used worldwide as the main surveillance test for TB control programmes. At standard interpretation the test is likely to identify only one 'false positive' animal in every 5000 non-infected cattle tested. However, on average it may only identify 81% of infected animals. There is currently no test, or combination of tests, that will:

- identify all cattle infected with TB; and
- identify all non-infected cattle as negative animals i.e. no "false positives".

15.3 To improve the control of bovine TB, a higher number of infected animals need to be identified, whilst limiting the number of false positives. This is to an extent achieved through the supplementary use of an Interferon-gamma blood test and an IDEXX Antibody blood test. These tests are used strategically in herds or individual animals, where risk criteria suggest they are best deployed.

15.4 In Wales we test:

- each herd every year
- any animal before it moves off farm* (subject to exemptions as set out in the Tuberculosis (Wales) Order 2010, as amended)
- any animal moving into a herd within the Low and intermediate TB areas* (subject to exemptions as set out in the Tuberculosis (Wales) Order 2010, as amended)

** Nb - Pre-movement testing for moves from herds in the Low TB Area & post-movement testing for herds in the Intermediate TB Areas are being introduced in legislative changes from Feb 2024. These are in addition to requirements already in place in other TB areas.*

15.5 We inspect animals at the abattoir to identify any infected with TB, not identified in the testing surveillance programme (they become “slaughterhouse cases” and result in follow up testing in the source herd).

16.0 TB compensation

16.1 Welsh Government has a statutory commitment to pay TB compensation.

16.2 This is a demand led area of expenditure that is directly linked to the volume of animals slaughtered because of TB. Variables such as the number of animals slaughtered, market value of each animal and the amount of salvage value applicable to each animal has an effect on the level of expenditure and salvage receipts received.

16.3 Animal owners are paid by the Welsh Government for cattle slaughtered because of TB as set out in The Tuberculosis (Wales) Order 2010 (as amended) (The TB Order). This payment is currently calculated based on the market value of each individual animal. A number of alternative payment options were outlined in the consultation.

16.4 The Minister has committed to review the compensation regime which will include further consultation. Any new regime would need to receive Senedd approval. It is estimated a full review will take up to 24 months to complete before any financial savings may be realised. This review will commence once resources allow.

16.5 [Development and implementation of post-Brexit food and drink strategy, including the Community Food Strategy.](#)

16.6 Welsh Government’s strategic vision for the food and drink manufacturing and processing industry was published on 29 November 2021 and is to create a strong and vibrant industry with a global reputation for excellence, having one of the most environmentally and socially responsible supply chains in the world. Its 10 point action plan focuses on business growth and improving productivity; develop international trade in

overseas markets and to achieve higher levels of environmental and social sustainability and promotion of Food and Drink Wales in Wales, the UK and globally.

16.7 The approach builds on the work achieved over the last decade, recognises the disruption of EU-Exit and Covid-19, and is predicated on a partnership with businesses and stakeholders in which Welsh Government support will increasingly be conditional on shared values and actions. The value of food and drink exports from Wales increased in 2020 including to our biggest market, to the EU. However, volume of exports to the EU declined and small businesses and some sectors (seafood) continue to find trade difficult.

16.8 The industry operates within a context of socio-economic issues such as the heightened concern to address the environmental and health impacts of food production and diet, a changed UK trading environment, the urgent need to decarbonise and minimise waste and environmental impact. With businesses located across Wales, the food and drink industry is part of a foundational economy and integral to supply chains which connect, in some important sectors, to Welsh farming and fishing, and to retail, wholesale and the service sector where the industry's product branding (GIs, sustainability credentials) offer is increasingly valued by consumers and is a USP for tourism.

16.9 Welsh Government intervention will focus on ten main areas:

- basing decisions about policy and support on evidence, using research, evaluation and market insight to inform and guide, and assisting businesses and stakeholders to develop knowledge capability to help themselves.
- growing stronger businesses which can sustainably grow and have market leading productivity.
- building networks, driving collaboration through networks, clusters, integrated with technical support, to spread best practice and find opportunities to add value.
- tackling systemic weaknesses such as supporting small businesses to become medium, and medium to become large, improving the infrastructure of business premises, aggregators and wholesalers and connecting these to create strong, local networks and supply chains.
- Supporting innovation and providing strong technical back-up, building on the success of Food Innovation Wales/Project Helix.
- finding and exploiting opportunities in the UK market, furthering our Retail Plan, making inroads into the foodservice and wholesale sectors, and seizing the opportunities of growing Direct to Consumer sales channels.
- increasing our exports and using our products and businesses to showcase Wales, with Blas Cymru our flagship event to champion the industry to a UK and international audience.
- build a strong brand, focussing on products and businesses which

represent the best of Wales, expanding our Protected Food Names family.

- attracting inward investment into businesses and our food infrastructure.
- ensuring our support is leveraged for driving the Welsh Government's core priorities such as sustainability, prosperous communities, decarbonisation, and fair work.

16.10 I was disappointed that the UK Government chose to net off outstanding EU funding as part of the last spending review. This, combined with the failure to recognise the previous Pillar Transfer, left Wales £243m short of the funding level we would have received had we remained in the EU. As negotiations on the next spending review begin next year (timing is unclear), we will pursue at least, the same total level of funding for farmers and land managers from the UK Government as we will receive in 2024/25. Recognising the inflationary pressures which have impacted the farming industry, as it has impacted other sectors and everyone in Wales, we will expect the UK Government to provide an inflationary uplift in funding.

17.0 Legislation

18.0 The process of transition to the new agricultural scheme such as piloting, administrative arrangements and research and development;

18.1 I have launched the next phase of our consultation on our proposals for future farm support. The Sustainable Farming Scheme has been developed with farmers and is designed to be an integrated long-term approach to support the resilience of our agricultural industry in Wales. It will be introduced in 2025.

18.2 The schemes we are supporting in 2024/25 complement the development of the Sustainable Farming Scheme, which will reward farmers and land managers for the work they do to meet the challenges of the climate and nature emergencies alongside the sustainable production of food, with benefits for food security in Wales and globally.

18.3 New functionally and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate our new agricultural scheme are also being considered, including carbon audit, habitat reviews using earth observation.

18.4 An RPW change programme has been established to review and build upon the administrative arrangements that were used for the delivery of previous CAP programmes. This work will be taken forward once again with farming stakeholders to ensure a fit for purpose and easy to follow online system is made available for farmers to access the new agricultural scheme.

18.5 RPW are researching and developing a new joined up customer experience model for accessing the scheme and wider Welsh Government

services and support as well as new in-field technologies, supported by Earth Observation and Satellite Imagery, to enhance the data capture and verification requirements of the new scheme.

The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021 (CoAP Regulations) will be fully implemented by 1 January 2025. Through a service level agreement with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the Welsh Government has committed £2.55m to support NRW's enforcement of the Regulations. The funding is split, with £1m committed in financial year 2023-2024 and £1.55 in 2024-25. The level of funding increases in year 2, following recruitment of staff during year 1.

18.6 The Welsh Marine and Fisheries Scheme is available for applications via targeted funding rounds alongside further investment through the Capacity Building in Welsh Coastal Communities initiative. These interventions will benefit the Welsh marine, fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

19.0 Key policies included in the new Animal Welfare Plan for Wales 2021-26;

19.1 The implementation of the plan is supported and monitored by the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group. The eight publically appointed members bring a wealth of experience and knowledge and are drawn from a broad range of sectors and areas of expertise.

19.2 The current 2022-2024 implementation plan, along with the Animal Welfare Plan for Wales 2021-2026, addresses several key PfG commitments in addition to ongoing Wales-based policy work and UK/GB policy collaborations:

- Develop a national model for regulation of animal welfare, introducing registration for animal welfare establishments, commercial breeders for pets or for shooting, and animal exhibits;
- Improve the qualifications for animal welfare inspectors to raise their professional status;
- Require CCTV in all slaughterhouses; and
- Restrict use of cages for farmed animals.

20.0 Livestock identification and movement policy

20.1 Following the consultation on Changes to Livestock Identification, Registration and Movement Reporting held in 2021, we are planning to implement mandatory legislative changes from 2024 to include Bovine EID tags, whole movement reporting, 24-hour reporting by CPRC's and removal of paper registrations for cattle.

20.2 EIDCymru is being developed into the Welsh multispecies traceability system and service and we anticipate cattle registration and movement

reporting to be launched on EIDCymru in Autumn/Winter 2023. From launch we will also enable voluntary changes to include recording of journey information, pre-movement reporting, online holding registers and circular show moves.

20.3 Discussions on tag specifications for Bovine EID are ongoing and we will be running a pilot on Bovine EID to gather and compare data from LF and UHF tags and readers. This will help us understand the full extent of the impacts each tag type and technology will have on keepers, markets, collection centres and abattoirs in Wales.

20.4 When I have agreed the final tag specifications for Bovine EID, I will update the Senedd and share the provisional implementation date for Bovine EID.

Annex A

Budget Structure (by SPA and BEL)

21.0 Agriculture, Food & Fisheries – FUNDING OF ACTIONS

The detailed breakdown of Actions by BEL activity is explained in the following sections.

Develop and deliver overarching policy and programmes on Agriculture, Food and Marine

Develop and deliver overarching policy and programmes on Agriculture, Food and Marine BEL's REVENUE	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Agriculture Strategy (2829)	650	650	(150)	-23%	500	(150)	-23%
Local Authority Framework Funding (2831)	200	200	(100)	-50%	100	(100)	-50%
Agriculture Customer Engagement (2860)	400	400	(50)	-13%	350	(50)	-13%
County Parish Holdings Project (2861)	500	500	0	0%	500	0	0%
EID Cymru (2862)	2,639	2,639	0	0%	2,639	0	0%
Livestock Identification (2863)	1,647	1,647	0	0%	1,647	0	0%
Technical Advice Services (2864)	358	358	0	0%	358	0	0%
Commons Act (2866)	433	433	0	0%	433	0	0%
Total Revenue	6,827	6,827	(300)	-4%	6,527	(300)	-4%

Develop and deliver overarching policy and programmes on Agriculture, Food and Marine BEL's REVENUE	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
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Local Authority Framework Funding (2831)	200	200	(100)	-50%	100	(100)	-50%
Agriculture Customer Engagement (2860)	400	400	(50)	-13%	350	(50)	-13%
County Parish Holdings Project (2861)	500	500	0	0%	500	0	0%
EID Cymru (2862)	2,639	2,639	0	0%	2,639	0	0%
Livestock Identification (2863)	1,647	1,647	0	0%	1,647	0	0%
Technical Advice Services (2864)	358	358	0	0%	358	0	0%
Commons Act (2866)	433	433	0	0%	433	0	0%
Total Revenue	6,827	6,827	(300)	-4%	6,527	(300)	-4%

Develop and deliver overarching policy and programmes on Agriculture, Food and Marine BEL's CAPITAL	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
EID Cymru (2862)	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Livestock Identification (2863)	1,000	1,000	0	0%	1,000	0	0%
Commons Act (2866)	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Total CAPITAL	1,000	1,000	0	0%	1,000	0	0%

The Technical Advice Services BEL (2864) supports the delivery of a range of statutory duties, policy development and support services in relation to agriculture and the environment including, but not limited to, TB valuations, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Agriculture Regulations, Agricultural Land Classification, plant health, Agricultural Land Tribunals, Agricultural Wages, the Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales and the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations.

BEL 2831 Funding is allocated to Welsh Local Authorities via the Heads of Trading Standards to deliver targeted and additional animal health and welfare enforcement activities via a local authority agreed Partnership Development Plan.

BEL 2860 This budget is the key mechanism for communicating and engaging with farming customers and the wider industry on Welsh Government administered schemes, policies and initiatives including the production of hard-copy updates to all BPS claimants and supporting farmers to become compliant with the Control of Agri Pollution Regulations.

The budget covers direct funding to the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society as well as other show Societies across Wales.

BEL 2861 - The allocation funds the CPH Project, which is rationalising and cleansing the CPH landscape in Wales. The allocated budget (£200,000) will ensure RPW continue to administer and develop the current IT platform with the other £300,000 being needed to support case work and other costs associated with the changing of CPH numbers for example amending APHA records

BEL 2862 EIDCymru is the sheep movement database for Welsh farmers, which meets the standards as set out in European Council Regulation 21/2004 where there is a requirement for member states to establish the basis for a European system to identify and record movements of sheep, goats and deer. Non-compliance with these regulations could lead to infraction and impact on future post EU exit trade agreements. EIDCymru provides increased traceability, helping to mitigate against the significant expense to both government and industry of an animal sheep disease outbreak.

CAP administration and making Payments in accordance with EU and WAG rules

CAP administration and making Payments in accordance with EU and WAG rules BEL's REVENUE	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Agriculture EU Pillar 1 Direct Payments (2787)	238,000	238,000	0	0%	238,000	0	0%
Single Payment Scheme Administration (2790)	9,194	9,194	(5,500)	-60%	3,694	(5,500)	-60%
Total Revenue	247,194	247,194	(5,500)	-2%	241,694	(5,500)	-2%

CAP Administration and making payments according to EU and WG rules BEL's CAPITAL	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Common Agriculture Policy IT (2789)	6,000	6,000	0	0%	6,000	0	0%
Total CAPITAL	6,000	6,000	0	0%	6,000	0	0%

The Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) is 100% domestic funded Direct Aid, which has been retained from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) under retained EU law. Payments are made directly to farmers who use the money to meet their business and other expenses. Payments are made in October (advance) and December (balances). Direct Payments for Farmers (Legislative Continuity) Act 2020 (c.2),

BEL 2790 RPW ICT systems comprises three main components:

- **CAPIT:** A rules based application validation and payment system.
- **Scheme Editor:** A Geographical Information System (GIS) based Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) used to map all land farmed and claimed in Wales either for BPS or Glastir
- **RPW Online:** An online portal for farmers (claimants) to apply and claim for various CAP and RDP schemes. This system supports a 100% digital service within RPW.

All three systems are integral to maintaining efficient delivery of all rural support schemes and it is imperative they continue to operate and be developed to:

- Maintain a robust audit trail and records retention for all EU payments.
- Deliver the suite of domestic support schemes in advance of the SFS.
- Support the delivery of SFS in 2025 and transition from BPS thereafter.

Rural Investment Schemes

Rural Economic and Sustainability Programme BEL's REVENUE	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
RIS (2833)	70,272	109,454	39,182	56%	46,139	(63,315)	-58%
Total Revenue	70,272	109,454	39,182	56%	46,139	- 63,315	-58%

Rural Economic and Sustainability Programme BEL's CAPITAL	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Rural Investment Schemes (2833)	20,500	30,000	9,500	46%	53,000	23,000	77%
Total CAPITAL	20,500	30,000	9,500	46%	53,000	23,000	77%

The purpose of this BEL is to support the development of rural schemes in 2024/25. We have been developing and implementing transitional schemes for farmers and land managers from 2021 to 2025 through EU replacement funding, ahead of the introduction of the Sustainable Farming Scheme. The funding will provide support to develop this longer term programme. The outcomes and performance measures for schemes being developed through EU replacement funding will be developed at programme and scheme level.

Welsh Government Rural Communities: Delivering the programmes within the Rural Development Plan 2014-20

Welsh Government Rural Communities: Delivering the programmes within the Rural Development Plan 2014-20 BEL's REVENUE	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Rural Development Plan 2014-20 (2949)	17,182	-	(17,182)	-100%	0	0	
Total Revenue	17,182	-	(17,182)	-100%	0	0	

Welsh Government Rural Communities: Delivering the programmes within the Rural Development Plan 2014-20 BEL's CAPITAL	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Rural Development Plan 2014-20 (2949)	9,500	0	(9,500)	-100%	0	0	
Total CAPITAL	9,500	-	(9,500)	-100%	0	0	

BEL 2949 - The Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 is a 7 year investment programme supporting a wide range of activities which is now closed.

Evidence based development for Rural Affairs

Evidence based development for Rural Affairs BEL's REVENUE	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Research & Evaluation (2240)	520	520	0	0%	520	0	0%
Total Revenue	520	520	0	0%	520	0	0%

This BEL funds important research and evaluation activity in relation to Welsh agriculture. This comprises two strands:

- 1) The Farm Business Survey (FBS) is an annual survey of farm businesses in Wales. It is conducted with the primary purpose of collecting detailed physical and financial data about the economic position of farm businesses throughout Wales. The survey is the primary source of information on the economics of farm businesses. The survey provides evidence on the levels of income in different agricultural sectors in Wales, financial performance, and farms' financial situation (assets, liabilities, net worth). For example, the Farm Business Survey is the source of the commonly quoted figure: on average, 80% of Welsh farmers' income derives from the Basic Farm Payment.
- 2) The FAPRI-UK economic modelling research project involves the development and maintenance of an economic modelling system which captures the dynamic inter-relationships among the variables affecting supply and demand in the main agricultural sectors of Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The FAPRI-UK research project will provide a key source of evidence on domestic agriculture policy.

Fisheries and aquaculture including the enforcement of Welsh Fisheries

Fisheries and aquaculture including the enforcement of Welsh Fisheries BEL's REVENUE	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Fisheries Schemes (2830)	565	565	0	0%	-	(565)	-100%
Fisheries (2870)	4,605	4,605	0	0%	3,605	(1,000)	-22%
Total Revenue	5,170	5,170	0	0%	3,605	(1,565)	-30%

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BEL 2870 covers funding for the following;

- **Fisheries Science and Evidence** – Delivery of a range of statutory and non-statutory fisheries science commitments, underpinning fisheries management of fisheries and policy development.
- **Welsh Marine and Fisheries Scheme** – This is the EMFF replacement scheme and is the vehicle for investment in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors
- **Fisheries Digital Systems** – Digital fisheries management systems include a range of IT systems for catch recording, vessel monitoring, recording fisheries and marine licence inspections, fish sales records and health and safety systems for enforcement officers.

- **Domestic Fisheries Policy** - We will continue to meet statutory obligations to manage permitted fisheries and deliver Fisheries Management Plans. This work will ensure our fisheries are sustainable by protecting the environment whilst, at the same time, maximising the economic and social benefits of fisheries to Wales.
- **Marine & Fisheries Trade** – Including core funding for Welsh Fisherman’s Association (WFA)
- **Control & Enforcement** - Covers all operational costs around Control and Enforcement, including Fisheries Patrol Vessels costs, such as maintenance, fuel and insurance.

Developing and Marketing Welsh Food and Drink

Developing and Marketing Welsh Food and Drink BEL's REVENUE	2023-24 Final Budget restated £'000	2024-25 Indicative Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Promoting Welsh Food and Industry Development (2970)	7,050	7,050	0	0%	4,790	(2,260)	-32%
Total Revenue	7,050	7,050	0	0%	4,790	(2,260)	-32%

BEL 2970 funds programmes across the food spectrum, leveraging financial resources from wider Welsh Government including RIS, EFF, ERF and a number of smaller initiatives as well as external funding sources such as Growth Deals;

- support business survival and resilience post Covid-19 and EU exit by leveraging funds to support food sector growth, working with retailers to encourage increased Welsh food and drink product listings, helping to secure an increased online presence of Welsh producers and promotion activities to increase the Welsh food manufacturing's share of supply into the food service sector, tourism and the public sector; and
- promote the Welsh food industry through international events and networks designed to increase inward investment.

Protect and Improve Animal Health & Welfare – FUNDING OF ACTIONS

Protect and Improve Animal Health & Welfare	2022-23 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	2023-24 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Revenue	41,499	41,499	0	0%	41,499	0	0%
TOTAL	41,499	41,499	0	0%	41,499	0	0%

The detailed breakdown of Actions by BEL activity is explained in the following sections.

Support and Delivery of the Animal Health and Welfare programme / strategy

Support and Delivery of the Animal Health and Welfare programme / strategy BEL's REVENUE	2022-23 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	2023-24 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Animal Health & Welfare Framework (2270)	1,108	1,108	0	0%	1,108	0	0%
Total Revenue	1,108	1,108	0	0%	1,108	0	0%

This budget covers a range of Government expenditure on animal health, welfare, disease prevention and control as well as surveillance and proactive management/contingency planning for exotic diseases. It includes on-going support to the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group and the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) in Animals and the Environment Delivery Group. This enables us to work in partnership with industry to raise standards of animal health and welfare, promote the responsible use of antibiotics and take effective action to manage animal disease outbreaks.

Management and delivery of TB Eradication and other Endemic Diseases

Management and delivery of TB Eradication and other Endemic Diseases BEL's REVENUE	2022-23 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	2023-24 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Animal and Plant Health Agency (2271)	18,281	18,281	0	0%	18,281	0	0%
TB Slaughter Payments Costs & Receipts (2272)	13,810	13,810	0	0%	13,810	0	0%
TB Eradication (2273)	8,300	8,300	0	0%	8,300	0	0%
Total Revenue	40,391	40,391	0	0%	40,391	0	0%

This funding supports the delivery of the statutory services and activities, the majority of which by, Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) services in Wales. The funding helps safeguard animal health and welfare as well as public health, rural livelihoods and trade and enhances food security through research, surveillance and inspection.

Funding is also provided for the statutory work undertaken by Food Standards Agency and funding to cover statutory TSE compensation payments should need arise.

The large proportion of APHA activity implements statutory requirements and Welsh Government policy relating to the TB Eradication Programme (in addition to BEL 2273) as well as applying controls to ensure the protection of human health and the human food chain.

The budget is in place to mitigate:

- Risk arising in the event of an exotic animal disease outbreak has wider repercussions given that the Welsh Government has contingent (financial) liability for unbudgeted costs in those circumstances e.g. cost to Government in Wales was estimated at around £100m in the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak when it was a non-devolved issue. In today's terms that cost could be significantly more without estimating damage to industry communities, trade and tourism in Wales where there would be a severe detrimental impact to incomes.
- The failure to demonstrate effective control on animal disease could undermine future negotiations on a single market where requirements for having in place animal disease controls at least equivalent to other Members States may be a position heavily emphasised as part of any trade agreement with the European Community.

Reductions in levels of animal disease control will impact on current and future UK trade negotiations as the UK will be expected to be able to demonstrate levels of control at least equivalent to European Member States.

BEL 2272 is a 'demand led' budget and the Welsh Government has a statutory duty to pay TB compensation. The amount of animals removed and therefore the pressure on this budget is inextricably linked to the progress of TB Eradication and the TB Eradication Programme budget (BEL 2273). Any interruption to eradication policies may result in disease spread, which in turn is likely to result in increased TB Compensation spend. If overspends occur there would be a consequence on wider OCVO and WG budgets, as these may also be called on to offset any overspend as seen in previous years.

BEL 2273 This budget covers a statutory commitment to the UK TB Eradication Plan. This BEL supplements the activity undertaken by our delivery partner The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) to deliver TB policies, including annual testing, and initiatives and projects such as Cymorth TB and epidemiological work to help underpin the evidence and approach to the TB Eradication Programme. This work is partly funded by this BEL and also by BEL 2271 (Animal Health and Welfare Delivery and Payments).

Rural Affairs Monitoring and EU Exit Strategy - FUNDING OF ACTIONS

Rural Affairs Monitoring and EU Exit Strategy	2022-23 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	2023-24 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
Strategy & Government Relations (2816)	3,389	3,389	0	0%	2,639	(750)	-22%
TOTAL	3,389	3,389	0	0%	2,639	(750)	-22%

The detailed breakdown of Actions by BEL activity is explained in the following sections.

This BEL supports the Strategic Evidence, Borders and Intergovernmental Relations Unit (SEBIR - formerly ERA EU Exit and Strategy Unit). The division was created to coordinate, support and drive our exit from the EU and transition activities. These developments are still evolving and require continued resource and effort to ensure effective engagement and influence across a number of UK Government departments. The division works across Climate Change and Rural Affairs portfolios to facilitate, coordinate and deliver strategic evidence, modelling and their practical applications to support the portfolios' wider policy making. This includes the management of the long-term ERAMMP contract, the development of Earth Observation technologies, a focused Environmental Evidence Programme and our academic engagement activities all supporting policy development, delivery and evaluation of Programme for Government (PfG) Commitments. With the completion of a comprehensive trade agreement with the EU the division's focus is to support the operationalisation of new cross-cutting functions and structures arising from leaving the EU and the management of intergovernmental relationships for the portfolio, with the primary responsibility for developing, delivering, managing and communicating policies resting with each of the respective policy teams.

Environment, Wildlife Management and Community Green Spaces - FUNDING OF ACTIONS

Environment, Wildlife Management and Community Green Spaces BEL's REVENUE	2022-23 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	2023-24 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change	2024-25 New Plans Draft Budget £'000	Change £'000	% Change
New National Park BEL 2803	700	700	0	0%	700	0	0%
Plant and Wildlife BEL 2802	886	886	1	100%	886	1	100%
Total Revenue	700	700	0	0%	700	0	0%

Plant and Wildlife Protection and Regulation - BEL 2802

This BEL supports work on the Plant Health Policy and legislation including scientific research and surveillance activity to identify and inform a response to Wales-specific risks and to communicate PH risks. This work area also includes policy development, legislation and regulation of plant protection products and biocides in Wales. The BEL also funds activity to control spread of invasive non-native species, including contributing to the GB non-native species inspectorate. The BEL also includes funding for protection of certain wildlife, including badger licensing and investigation of suspected wildlife poisoning incidents and the policy work behind the ban on snares and glue traps in 2023 and the Wales Rural & Wildlife Police Crime Coordinator.

The BEL together with BEL2825 in the CC MEG also provides for Agricultural EIA proactive screening requests and investigation of potential breaches of the regulation, enforcement and remediation where damage to important unimproved habitat on agricultural land has occurred. The BEL also covers the Plant Varieties and Seeds policies, including costs of maintaining national lists and testing of new varieties of plant. This leads to a need for policy development on new Genetic Technologies in response to legislative changes by UK Government which increasingly impacts Wales. These technologies and related policies are cross cutting, also impacting animal health and welfare and food and animal feed including novel foods (lab grown proteins) but plants are among the first organisms which may result from regulatory change in England. It also provides for training, communications and other incidental expenses including those related to tribunals and litigation within the policy areas covered by LNFD Plant Health and Environmental Protection Branch.

New National Park BEL 2803

Designation of a new National Park to cover the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley is the responsibility of the Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales & Trefnydd.

A specific budget allocation in 2024-25 will continue the delivery of the Programme for Government commitment to designate a new National Park to cover the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley.

Designating a National Park is a significant undertaking and the majority of this funding enables Natural Resources Wales, our statutory advisors in this area, to undertake the necessary preparatory formal programme. NRW has completed work on the preparation of an updated and streamlined process for assessing the case for new landscape designations in Wales within the context of Welsh legislation. Alongside this, NRW is developing the evidence base required to inform the assessment of the case for the new National Park. NRW has also begun an engagement and consultation process to ensure all stakeholders are kept informed and have a voice during the process. This funding ensures NRW takes the Designation work on as effectively and robustly as possible, with the necessary expertise and capacity. 6 new posts have been recruited into a new Programme team.

The funding also provides additional revenue to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB to build capacity and resilience while the designation work is taken forward.

Summary

The RA MEG Draft Budget BEL table for 2024-25 is presented to the Committee for consideration.

Lesley Griffiths
Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd