

Lesley Griffiths MS
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

6 October 2020

Dear Minister

Thank you for attending the Committee's meeting on 17 September. The Committee has agreed that I should write to you to follow up on several matters. This letter also addresses several issues which have been raised with the Committee by stakeholders in response to a call for written evidence in relation to Covid-19. **I would be grateful if you would respond by 6 November**, so that your response can inform the next scrutiny session you have agreed to attend.

Animal Welfare

Third-party puppy sales

1. In your Written Statement of 5 October, you announced that "a ban on commercial third party sales will be introduced by the end of this Senedd." Can you provide the Committee with an update on when you will bring forward the secondary legislation? Will you commit to providing the Committee with the secondary legislation in draft in advance to enable the Committee to consider and provide feedback on them?

Dog and Cat homes

2. The Committee has received concerning information from the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH) in relation to the Welsh animal rescue sector. In response to a survey it conducted about the impact of Covid-19, only two Welsh respondents were certain they would remain solvent beyond the end of this year. Welsh respondents to the same survey predicted income reduction of an average of 80% due to Covid-19. Given that the impact on the sector will likely continue for



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some time, what support will be made available to ensure that organisations based in Wales can continue to operate?

Veterinary practices

3. The Committee has been told that veterinary practices have been severely impacted by Covid-19 and have not been able to access some of the financial support provided to businesses because of the unique nature of their work. Can you provide the Committee with details of any discussions you have had with the British Veterinary Association about the impact of Covid-19 on the sector? Can you provide the Committee with an update on the grants and financial support that is available to the sector?

Fisheries

4. You have told the Committee the Welsh Government will provide financial support to eligible aquaculture businesses via the Aquaculture Business Support scheme, which closed on 21 September. Can you provide the Committee with an update on the take-up of the scheme?
5. The WFA-CPC (Welsh Fishermen's Association - Cymdeithas Pysgotwyr Cymru) drew the Committee's attention to the "Barnett consequential" the Welsh Government will receive due to allocations to the UK Government's fisheries response fund. Can you confirm how much the Welsh Government has received and how much of this funding was used to support fisheries in Wales?
6. Do you have plans to extend the Welsh Fisheries Grant? What further financial support will be available to Welsh fishers to deal with the effects of the pandemic?
7. The WFA-CPC told the Committee about the severe impact on the sector of the closure of export markets, such as Asia. In the likelihood that this situation is not remedied soon, what actions do you plan to take or have already taken to increase domestic consumption of seafood?
8. The UK Government has made funding available for businesses focused on processing and direct sales. Is this something you have considered for Wales?
9. The sector has been severely impacted by Covid-19 and the closure of export markets and faces considerable uncertainty with a potential "no-deal" Brexit months away. Can you provide the Committee with details of your plans to support fisheries and aquaculture businesses in the event of a "no-deal" Brexit?

Food and drink

10. Can you provide the Committee with an update on discussions you have or intend to have with UK Government counterparts concerning the proposals to make changes to the Small Brewer Relief?
11. Cardiff University's Sustainable Places Research Institute told the Committee that during the Covid-19 pandemic "Businesses have experienced rapid increases in consumer demand for Welsh grown produce". The Open Food Network (OFN) told us that since the Covid outbreak there has been an 850% increase in the turnover through OFN shopfronts across Wales. What actions are you taking to ensure that such increases can be converted into long term changes in consumption behaviours?

Air quality

12. You told the Committee that "the first two months of lockdown really showed significant decreases in some pollutant levels, but other pollutant levels apparently increased at the same time." Can you



provide the Committee with further information on this matter, in particular those areas where pollutants increased? Do you believe any lessons can be learned from this variance?

13. Can you provide an update on:

- any discussions you have had with the UK Government about restricting the sale and use of fireworks, and
- the outcome of work undertaken by officials across departments to establish where best the Welsh Government can focus its efforts to reduce the negative impact of fireworks on people and animals?

Green/Blue recovery and Climate Change

14. Will you give a commitment that marine issues will be a central part of any “green” recovery? Can you provide examples of how this will be achieved?

15. You have told the Committee that you are awaiting a report arising from the work Sir David Henshaw has been leading concerning the green/blue recovery. Will you update the Committee on the outcomes of that work as soon as you can?

Agriculture and food security

16. You told the Committee that the “EU agri-food supply chain stakeholder group” had recently met for the first time. Can you provide further details of the purpose and membership of the group?

17. Cardiff University’s Sustainable Places Research Institute told the Committee that “Wales currently relies on imports for 95% of its fresh fruit and vegetables”. What preparatory work has been made to ensure that, in the event of a “no-deal” Brexit, domestic food producers can step in to fill any gaps in the food supply chain? Will you commit to bringing forward a plan to increase the use of domestically produced food if importing food becomes more difficult?

18. How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected your approach to food policy in Wales? Please provide examples.

19. Can you provide the Committee with an update on Welsh Government policies on allotments?

20. You told the Committee that “COVID-19 has shown me how many more discussions I should be having with supermarkets”. Can you provide an update on the meetings with supermarket representatives you have scheduled up to Christmas 2020?

Plastic pollution and littering

21. The Marine Conservation Society told us it anticipated levels of pollution on Welsh beaches would rise over the summer months “given that there are now limited opportunities for organisations such as ourselves to be able to undertake beach cleans using dedicated volunteers, coupled with a likely overall increase in domestic coastal holidays”. What assessment have you undertaken of any increases in marine pollution as a result of this?

Other issues

22. Several of the Committee’s stakeholders have benefitted from the Welsh Government Third Sector Covid-19 Response Fund. What discussions have you had with the sector about any further financial support that will be required once furlough arrangements come to an end?



23. Wales Environment Link (WEL) told the Committee that “Many elements of the Welsh Government’s Environmental Growth agenda will depend on the work of charities, and many conservation and community projects are partnerships between Government agencies and civil society.” It went on to say that “On-going financial losses will hamper the ability of charities to deliver essential conservation and infrastructure improvement work.” What consideration have you given to the impact of this on the delivery of Welsh Government environmental and climate change policies?

Common Frameworks

24. Can you provide the Committee with an update on the development of Common Frameworks that fall within the Committee’s remit, including your latest understanding of when provisional frameworks will be available for Senedd scrutiny?
25. Are you content with the process for developing and finalising the Common Frameworks? Do you have any specific concerns relating to any of the frameworks that fall within your remit?

Environmental principles and governance

26. Can you provide the Committee with an update on discussions with the UK Government to secure an amendment to the UK Environment Bill to make provision for cooperative working between the Office for Environmental Protection and any equivalent environmental governance body?
27. Can you confirm that interim environmental governance measures will be in place by the end of the Implementation Period?
28. What arrangements will be put in place to raise public awareness of the interim complaints procedure?
29. You have previously told the Committee that you intend to put in place arrangements for all complaints to be independently assessed. Who will be responsible for undertaking these assessments?
30. Can you clarify whether, and when, you intend to publish proposals for longer-term environmental governance arrangements?

Yours sincerely,



Mike Hedges MS

Chair of Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

