



Ein cyf/Our ref ATISN 10464

14 June 2016

Dear

ATISN 10464

Thank you for your request which I received on 24 March 2016. You asked if the Welsh Government has a long term plan for agriculture in Wales and if Wales' planning policies are compatible with The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

You asked for reports and transcripts where these issues have been discussed in relation to the development of housing on agricultural land including consideration of the economy and agricultural employment, climate change and the need to reduce food miles.

The information you requested can be found below.

The Welsh Government does not set housing targets for local authorities to follow; this is a matter for each local planning authority to determine as part of preparing their local development plan (LDP), based on local and national evidence. This process involves authorities giving consideration to a number of factors, including their assessment of local housing requirements and the need for affordable housing (by preparing a Local Housing Market Assessment), the links between homes and jobs, and the Welsh Government's household projections.

The Welsh Government requires local planning authorities to maintain a five-year supply of genuinely available housing land to enable the housing targets in LDPs to be delivered. Further details are set out in section 9.2 of *Planning Policy Wales*, the Welsh Government's planning policy document.

Planning Policy Wales also addresses the issue of conserving agricultural land. The value of agricultural land as a resource for the future is one of the factors that local planning authorities need to consider when allocating sites for housing in their LDPs. Section 4.10 of *Planning Policy Wales* states that the 'best and most versatile' agricultural land should be conserved as a finite resource for the future. This covers land classified under the 'Agricultural Land Classification' as land of grades 1, 2 and 3a.

This links with the wider Welsh Government BMV policy which seeks to ensure that the best quality and most productive land is conserved for the future. This policy demonstrates a continued strategic and long term commitment to promoting a sustainable and resilient agricultural industry by ensuring that the soil resource it depends upon is represented in the planning system.

Local planning authorities in preparing their LDPs and in making decisions on individual planning applications should give considerable weight to protecting such land from development. Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a should only be developed if there is an overriding need for the development and either brownfield land or land in lower agricultural grades is unavailable or has another recognised environmental value which outweighs the agricultural value. More generally, *Planning Policy Wales* (at paragraph 9.2.9) also includes a set of criteria that local planning authorities should consider in deciding which sites to allocate for housing in their development plans.

Planning Policy Wales is available on the Welsh Government's website at the following link: <http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/ppw/?lang=en>.

The Welsh Government's long term plan for agriculture is outlined in the Strategic Framework for Welsh Agriculture and will be a new way of working that brings together the many different policies and independent reviews that have been undertaken by the Welsh Government in this area. The purpose is to achieve a vision of a prosperous, resilient agriculture industry promoting Wales' present and future well-being.

This is very much a joint initiative – undertaken with, and supported by, leading industry bodies (FUW, NFU Cymru, CLA Cymru, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, the Dairy Development Centre, HCC, YFC and the Tenant Farmers Association (TFA) Cymru). The Partnership Group chaired by Kevin Roberts will provide the leading role in establishing a framework to deliver the overall vision. It will develop and execute action plans necessary to achieve this vision and publish and maintain strategic priorities and delivery plans, with a programme of work to focus on actions that can deliver significant impact. By strengthening communication, co-operation and co-ordination within the industry they will champion a forward looking, innovative entrepreneurial spirit in the industry.

The new group's work will provide synergies with the progress Welsh Government is already making through partnership with the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board, the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group and the Natural Resource Management Strategy Reference group. The work of all these groups actions are contributing to the Welsh Government's overall vision for sustainable growth in the agri-food sector.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 was enacted in April 2016. To date there are no reports or transcripts of meetings where the issue of planning policies in relation to agricultural land has been discussed. Officials are at an early stage of considering how *Planning Policy Wales* can be restructured to align with the well-being goals contained within the Act.

Future reviews of planning policies will need to consider the well-being goals and 5 ways of working contained in the Act and also the implications of other legislation including the Environment (Wales) Act 2015.

Further information on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including the statutory implementation guidance which has been produced by the Welsh Government can be found at the following link: <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>. Further information on the Environment Act is available via this link: <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/natural-resources-management/environment-act/?lang=en>

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: FreedomOfInformationOfficer@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

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