



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Yr Is-bwyllgor Datblygu Gwledig
The Rural Development Sub-committee**

**Dydd Iau, 21 Hydref 2010
Thursday, 21 October 2010**

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn yr is-bwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the sub-committee. In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r is-bwyllgor yn bresennol
Sub-committee members in attendance

Andrew R.T. Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (yn dirprwyo ar ran Brynle Williams) Welsh Conservatives (substitute for Brynle Williams)
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd yr Is-bwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Sub-committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Peter Cole	Partneriaethau Twristiaeth Rhanbarthol Regional Tourism Partnerships
Gary Haggaty	Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government
Siân Hughes	Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government
Elin Jones	Aelod Cynulliad, Plaid Cymru (y Gweinidog dros Faterion Gwledig) Assembly Member, The Party of Wales (the Minister for Rural Affairs)

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

Aled Elwyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Nia Seaton	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service
Meriel Singleton	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.01 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.01 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Bore da i chi i gyd, a chroeso i'r cyfarfod hwn o'r Is-bwyllgor Datblygu Gwledig. Gwnaf y cyhoeddiadau arferol i ddechrau. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân, felly os bydd argyfwng, bydd angen i chi ddilyn y tywysyddion o'r ystafell. Mae angen diffodd pob dyfais electronig, gan gynnwys BlackBerrys, gan eu bod yn effeithio ar yr offer darlledu. Mae Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn gweithio drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg, ac mae clustffonau ar gael i glywed y gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd o'r Gymraeg i'r Saesneg ar sianel 1.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Good morning to you all, and welcome to this meeting of the Rural Development Sub-committee. I will make the usual announcements to start. We are not expecting a fire drill, so if there is an emergency, you will need to follow the ushers from the room. All electronic devices must be switched off, including BlackBerrys, as they interfere with the broadcasting equipment. The National Assembly for Wales operates through the medium of both Welsh and English languages, and headsets are available to hear the simultaneous translation from Welsh into English on channel 1. You

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can also use the equipment to amplify the sound if you are having difficulty hearing what is said. Finally, do not touch the microphones; they will be switched on automatically.

9.03 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Dwristiaeth Wledig yng Nghymru: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Rural Tourism: Evidence Session

[2] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Dechreuwn heddiw gyda thystiolaeth ar gyfer ein ymchwiliad i dwristiaeth wledig yng Nghymru, ac wedyn bydd sesiwn ar yr ymchwiliad i ffermydd awdurdodau lleol. Dechreuwn gyda'r ymchwiliad i dwristiaeth wledig yng Nghymru, a chrosawn Peter Cole o'r partneriaethau twristiaeth rhanbarthol. Croeso cynnes i chi, Peter. Fe'ch gwahoddaf i wneud sylwadau agoriadol byr yn y lle cyntaf, os dymunwch wneud, ac yna symudwn at gwestiynau'r Aelodau.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: We begin today with evidence into our inquiry into rural tourism in Wales, and we will then have a session on the inquiry into local authority farms. We will start with the inquiry into rural tourism in Wales, and we welcome Peter Cole from the regional tourism partnerships. A very warm welcome to you, Peter. I invite you to make some brief opening remarks first, if you wish to do so, and we will then move on to Members' questions.

[3] **Mr Cole:** Good morning, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to give evidence on behalf of the regional tourism partnerships of Wales. It is probably fitting that we are discussing the importance of tourism on this day because, this evening, the Wales tourism awards are being distributed, which will recognise an extensive range of rural tourism, hospitality, businesses, events, activities and attractions.

[4] So that everyone is aware, there are four regional tourism partnerships covering north, mid, south-west and south-east Wales. I am from the south-east Wales partnership, but my colleagues have suggested that we give one piece of evidence rather than your having to hear the same thing four times. So, thank you for your agreement to the compressing of our evidence.

[5] We have been in existence since 2002. We receive devolved resources and responsibilities from Visit Wales for the formulation and delivery of regional tourism strategies. Around our table, all the local authorities and an equal number of industry representatives sit, so we occupy a space between Visit Wales, local authorities and the tourism industry.

[6] It is a sort of crossroads. What we do know is that, although we serve within particular regional administrative boundaries and local authorities serve within their boundaries within our patches, those boundaries mean very little to visitors. Luckily, in a way, visitors see destinations in very different terms. Many of the places that visitors recognise in Wales cross those boundaries. Places like the Brecon Beacons or the Wye valley, the emerging destination of the Cambrian mountains, the Valleys regional park and so on are entities that stretch beyond administrative boundaries. Our job, in simple terms, is to ensure that the visitor, and, to a certain extent, the industry, does not see the join between the various administrative boundaries. We keep that for administrative and monitoring purposes.

[7] With regard to the strategic area in which we are operating, it is fair to say that there is no shortage of strategies for rural tourism. There is any amount, piling up on shelves. Some

of them are used, and some of them are perhaps not used as often as they might be. I do not think that we have a shortage of strategies or action plans, but there was one that tried to pull everything together. It was a strategy led by the former Wales Tourist Board in 2004, called the 'action plan for the countryside experience'. In the evidence that we submitted, we showed you a diagram with that particular piece of work sitting in the middle, because it sought to bring together all the strands that lay around it in the diagram.

[8] However, a great deal of water has gone under the bridge since then. Again, these things are listed in the evidence and I will not go through them all as you know them as well as I do. However, there are two things that I think are particularly significant for your deliberations. One is the fact that we are now moving to introduce the concept of destination management across Wales, bringing together the voluntary, public and private sectors at a destination level to agree a way forward. It falls out of a lot of work that has been done at regional level and national level to bring the industry and the support sector and the public sector together.

[9] The other thing that I would suggest is perhaps more of a philosophical issue, in that it was perhaps once quite easy to talk about rural tourism compared to, I suppose, urban tourism in Wales. There was a feeling that there were perhaps a number of counties in Wales of a particularly rural character. Traditionally, there were nine counties that we looked at as rural counties. However, I guess that, through things such as the rural development plan, we are now seeing a new definition of rurality. The Assembly Government recognises that 82 per cent of the land area of Wales is rural and that includes huge stretches of post-industrial Wales as well as, if you like, pre-industrial Wales. So, there has been a philosophical shift with regard to what rurality really means, and that has implications for tourism as well. So, it is no longer necessarily about traditions per se. It is probably about connectivity, access, transport, the cost of housing and those sorts of things, which are shared now, not just by the traditional rural areas of Wales, but other areas with these RDPs, such as south-east and north-east Wales—areas that were not previously seen as having a rural facet.

9.10 a.m.

[10] Before I take questions, I was going to talk about some numbers. I know that there were some in the report that you have received, but I will highlight some of them. If we return to those nine traditional rural counties for the moment, then we can see that 67 per cent of tourism employment in Wales is in those nine rural counties and 62 per cent of tourism value, compared with 81 per cent of the bed stock; 65 per cent of service bed stock and 85 per cent of non-service bed stock is in rural areas. So, there is a big proportion of the capacity, but a lower proportion of actual income compared with that capacity. We estimate that rural tourism income in those nine counties has risen 16 per cent since 2000, in real terms, but that is against 25 per cent over all of Wales, so the growth has not been as marked in rural areas. One of the most disappointing statistics for a lot of us is around seasonality, in that 25 per cent of tourist days are between October and March in rural areas, compared with 30 per cent for the whole of Wales. I know that in south-east Wales, 40 per cent of visits are between October and March. So there is a big disparity between some parts of Wales and others in terms of seasonality. That is even despite the enormous investments in all-weather, all-year activities and attractions, such as the National Botanic Garden of Wales and the cluster of gardens in the Tywi valley, or the investment in places such as Afan Forest Park for mountain biking. So, that is an issue that we feel still needs to be addressed. I know that you have asked me a number of questions in the original call, and I guess that we can expand on those in a minute.

[11] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr iawn, Peter, am eich rhagarweiniad defnyddiol iawn. **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you very much, Peter, for your very useful introduction. You mentioned the relationship

gyda Croeso Cymru a'ch perthynas chi fel partneriaeth lleol gydag awdurdodau lleol. A wnewch ehangu rywfaint ar y berthynas rhwng Llywodraeth Cymru â'r partneriaethau twristiaeth rhanbarthol a sut yn union mae hynny'n gweithio? A yw hynny'n effeithiol, ac oes modd gwella'r berthynas arbennig honno?

with Visit Wales and your relationship as a local partnership with local authorities. Will you expand upon the relationship between the Welsh Government and the regional tourism partnerships and how it works exactly? Is that effective, and is there any way of improving that particular relationship?

[12] **Mr Cole:** As I said, we derive our funds through Visit Wales from the Welsh Assembly Government, so we are, if you like, creatures of the Welsh Assembly Government, and we work to a remit letter each year. So, we have an agreement or a bargain with the Government in terms of what should be delivered across the course of each year; there is an annual funding agreement. The wider issue of how tourism is perceived by the rest of the Assembly Government is an interesting one, in that I think that it is often easier to make the connections at a regional level between the bits that need to work than it is at a national level, probably because—and it is not a criticism of anyone—those out working at a regional level tend to be more operationally focused or delivery focused. So, if we are talking to colleagues in the food and marketing development division on food issues, for example, that is much easier to do at a regional level. We can talk about the delivery of the food tourism action plan in practical terms at a regional level, where, in a sense, you do not have to go through the higher policy issues before you can get to delivery. Given that Wales is a small place and everyone tends to know everyone else, it works extremely well at that kind of level. It is small enough to have a grasp of what is going on at a local level, but to also have that interface to national policy. So the regional system seems to work pretty well.

[13] It is fair to say that those relationships are not, perhaps, as strong as they should be in some areas. Lately, we have had a pretty good relationship with parts of the Department for Economy and Transport, for example, because of initiatives such as the single investment fund and Flexible Support for Business, although the rules are changing for that. In areas such as transport, it is a little more difficult to make the connections that are needed to remind colleagues that tourism offers potential customers for rural transport, and that it is also a way of increasing take-up of rural transport, justifying services and so on. So that does not perhaps work as well in some areas as in others.

[14] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yr ydych eisoes wedi dweud wrthym fod digon o strategaethau ar gael ar gyfer twristiaeth yn y Gymru wledig. Pa fath o strategaethau yr ydych yn credu sydd fwyaf effeithiol: ai'r math o gymorthdaliadau sydd wedi cael eu targedu yn arbennig at bobl o fewn y diwydiant, neu strategaethau mwy eang, sy'n sôn am hyrwyddo ardaloedd arbennig i ddenu twristiaid?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You have already told us that there are plenty of strategies available for tourism in rural Wales. What sort of strategies do you feel are most effective: the kind of grants that are specifically targeted at people in the industry, or the broader strategies that deal with promoting specific areas as tourist destinations?

[15] **Mr Cole:** We need to deal with tourism on an integrated basis. Our regional strategy follows the lines of the national tourism strategy, 'Achieving Our Potential', which tries to tie up a number of the facets. It is relatively easy to develop marketing strategies, and a lot of work has been done on the brand of Wales, and on branding and promoting parts of Wales, over many years. That has been done very effectively, and there is great recall of Visit Wales's marketing output. It is important that Wales can then walk the talk, and can deliver the brand that is being talked about, and that the brand marketing reflects what is there on the ground for people to experience and that we can delight those people and exceed their expectations. That requires a hard edge behind any marketing strategy for a destination or

country, in terms of quality. It is about ensuring that the levers of quality are to hand. Whatever department is involved in delivering quality, the experience that the visitor gets, whether that relates to skills, the physical quality of accommodation, the environment, or rights of way, must back up the brand promise that we are making. In rural Wales, we are making a lot of promises about access and outside adventure activities. We have to be able to deliver on them: the thing has to work. That is why I come back to the importance of destination management to bring those things together. Coming back to your original point, it is much easier to promote tourism on a local or regional level than at a national level. National officials need to acknowledge and push those in their organisations to get involved, but the real delivery is seen closer to the ground.

[16] **Joyce Watson:** On the topic of destination management and rural areas, do you think that there is an issue with the types of people who might go to a particular destination for a particular experience? I am talking about older tourists, who would, perhaps, travel to a destination on a coach. Do we need to be looking at better provision and larger hotels? There are not necessarily that many larger hotels in mid and rural Wales.

9.20 a.m.

[17] **Mr Cole:** It is difficult to work on the principle of 'build it and they will come', because it does not always work that way. During my career in tourism, which now stretches to about 33 years, there has been an enormous transformation in the range of visitors that Wales gets, the ways in which they seek to get here and the degree of reliance or independence that they have in relation to tour operators.

[18] Coach travel has been very important to Wales over a number of years. However, you are right to say that there are very few places that can now cater for a coach-load of people at a time, certainly in mid-Wales. It is a little different on the coastal strip in north Wales. The reason that a lot of the larger hotels melted away is that, in the end, there was not enough demand and the market was not there. That is not to say that we should not be trying to find ways of bringing the people in those markets back to Wales. There are probably more imaginative ways in which we can use other transport systems that could help in that process. For example, we could target smaller groups: a lot of people moving around in smaller, bespoke, guided groups and so on. There are ways in which we could cater for them. So, yes, we have seen a huge transformation, and there are limited options available.

[19] Moving on to slightly different territory, if you talk to operators such as Travelodge, as we do from time to time, you will find that they build so many units or rooms at a time because they try to cover that market, as well as some of the other independent leisure or business markets.

[20] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Trof yn awr at y cwestiynau olaf sy'n ymwneud â pholisïau'r Llywodraeth a'r modd y maent yn cael eu gweithredu ar lawr gwlad. Mae'r cyfrifoldeb dros dwristiaeth wedi symud o fewn Llywodraeth Cymru. Ar adegau, mae'r cyfrifoldeb wedi gorwedd gyda'r portffolio datblygu economaidd ac ar adegau eraill gyda'r portffolio treftadaeth. Cyfeiriasoch at wahanol agweddau ar ddatblygu twristiaeth. Mae'r cyfrifoldeb hwnnw bellach wedi'i ddychwelyd i Croeso Cymru, lle'r oedd sgiliau ac yn y blaen yn y gorffennol mewn sectorau gwahanol. Hoffwn ofyn dau **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I will conclude the questions relating to the Government's policies, and how they are implemented on the ground. Responsibility for tourism has shifted within the Government. At various times, this responsibility has rested with the economic development portfolio and with the heritage portfolio. You referred to different aspects of tourism development. That responsibility has now been returned to Visit Wales, where skills existed in the past in different sectors. I would like to ask two specific questions. Are you disappointed that tourism is not included in the Welsh

gwestiwn penodol. A ydych yn siomedig nad yw twristiaeth wedi'i chynnwys yn rhaglen adnewyddu'r economi Llywodraeth Cymru fel un o'r chwe sector o bwys? Hefyd, a ydych yn hapus i weld y cyfrifoldeb dros ddatblygu twristiaeth yn gorwedd yn gyfan gwbl gyda Croeso Cymru?

Government's economic renewal programme, as one of the six key sectors? Also, are you content to see responsibility for tourism resting entirely with Visit Wales?

[21] **Mr Cole:** I must take at face value the reassurances that we receive that tourism is still extremely important to Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government—so important that the Government has given tourism development powers back to Visit Wales. That is my political reply.

[22] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Do not feel that you have to be political. You can say whatever you want.

[23] **Mr Cole:** Tourism is a fascinating area. I would not work in it if I did not love it. It seeps into so many aspects of life, including politics. It covers so many bases. For rural Wales, which is your concern here, it is the major industry. Therefore, not to see it as up there in lights as one of the top sectors of importance would appear to be disappointing. On the other hand, it is early days, but we are content that tourism development is being recoupled with tourism marketing and tourism quality, and that those aspects are being brought back together. We feel that it is probably better to deal with those things on an integrated basis. There is still going to be a bit of baggage attached to the movement of responsibility one way and then back again. What could have been lost in that process was the full range of business support. Every business needs advice from time to time, whether it is a tourism business or something else. It is important that there are means of providing that.

[24] Although people highlighted the grants or financial support that were available through the FS4B system, it provided a lot more, such as looking at workforce development and putting together business plans or health checks for businesses and advising them in that way. The development grant/loan aspect is being brought back into Visit Wales, but I feel uncertain about where the more general pastoral care will come from. I do not mind this, but a lot of it will come back to us, as people will talk to their regional tourism partnership. We will cope with it as best we can with the resources that we have. A lot of people will turn to local authorities, knocking on the door of their local authority tourism officer. That is also no bad thing, as it will ensure that that relationship is strong and goes beyond producing a brochure every year, and is far more about the health of the tourism sector in that particular area. You are talking about a lot of people with a lot of pressures on their time and resources. So, as I said, my only caveat at the moment is about pastoral care of the sector with the disengagement from FS4B. It remains to be seen whether the advocacy for tourism within the Assembly Government will be as strong as it was when it was a designated sector.

[25] There were question marks at the time about the move into heritage from economy, but it has worked extremely well—I would say that with you sitting there, would I not? Tourism has realised that what makes Wales different and how we can define ourselves differently to competing destinations is our cultural output, what people find to do, see and experience, and the sense of place. Those are the things that differentiate Wales. We love our scenery, our coast and our mountains, but many other destinations can claim those things and provide them. It is our culture that defines us as different. Therefore, the closer link with the cultural sector has been refreshing and exciting, or it has been for me; some of my colleagues may have found it a bit more difficult. Tourism can fit in a lot of places, but it fits fairly easily into the heritage portfolio and gives it an edge by adding wealth creation to things that need to be supported and funded.

[26] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Symudwn at gwestiynau gan aelodau eraill yr is-bwyllgor. Dylwn ddweud yn y fan hon bod Kirsty Williams yn anhwylyus y bore yma ac yn methu â bod gyda ni, yn anffodus. Mae Andrew R.T. Davies yn dirprwyo ar ran Brynle Williams, ac yr ydym yn falch i glywed bod Brynle yn gwella erbyn hyn, ond mae'n debyg na fydd gyda ni tan y flwyddyn newydd, felly bydd Andrew gyda ni am weddill y tymor hwn.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: We will move on to questions from other sub-committee members. I should say at this point that, unfortunately, Kirsty Williams is unwell this morning and unable to join us. Andrew R.T. Davies is substituting on behalf of Brynle Williams, and we are pleased to hear that Brynle is now recovering, but he is unlikely to rejoin us until the new year, so Andrew will be with us for the rest of this term.

[27] **Joyce Watson:** You say that most Welsh Government support for rural tourism is generic and not targeted specifically at rural areas. What impact do you think that that approach has on measuring the development of the rural tourism sector?

9.30 a.m.

[28] **Mr Cole:** It is always easier to make a case for support with returns on investment and those kinds of things when you are closer to the centre of things. So, I do not think that the issues around rural businesses are always fully taken into account in terms of access and so on. There are issues about things like broadband and transport, which make it more difficult for isolated rural businesses to create the levels of activity or return that others can. Broadband is a good example—it is a double whammy, if you like, for a tourism business. Not only does a lack of broadband prevent businesses from e-marketing through information and communications technology to the same extent as their competitors, but also, when people arrive at a destination, they expect to be able to use their laptop or iPad and all the rest of it; they expect WiFi as standard. I do not understand that, myself, because I like to get rid of all those things when I go away, but people expect to be connected. As I say, it is a bit of a double whammy for tourism businesses in not-spots, as they are called.

[29] **Joyce Watson:** That is interesting. As I said to the Chair earlier, I am of the view that tourism sometimes sits on its own, isolated from the reality of the world; you will have to tell me if that is correct. You just mentioned one reality of the world—access to broadband—and I am not convinced that tourism is fully integrated with society on that. You mentioned transport and broadband, and I have mentioned coaching holidays. Is broadband taken seriously enough compared with the other economic drivers, whatever they may be, that are necessary for business generally?

[30] **Mr Cole:** No, I do not think that it is taken seriously enough, or we would have sorted it by now. We had an interesting discussion in the economic forum for south-east Wales about the economic renewal programme. The discussion was still about getting full broadband coverage for Wales, and I thought that it is no longer a plus point to tell people to come to Wales because we have broadband. It is a hygiene factor: like electricity, people expect it to be there. If you do not have it, it counts against you, but it does not count for you if you do have it, if you see what I mean. The internet has revolutionised travel and tourism and the way that tourism does business; tourism accounts for the second-biggest use of the internet, and I will not mention the biggest. It means that every operator in Wales can talk directly to their customers, wherever they are in the world, and tell them what is going on, provide them with offers and so on. It revolutionises the way that those of us who sit in the middle should be working, because we are no longer gatekeepers; we are helpers, enablers, bundlers of information and facilitators. We can put bells and whistles on it, but the real relationship that the internet allows is between a business and its customers. That is an intimate relationship for tourism, because in the end, you will meet your customers face to face and interact with them, and you have a relationship for life if you play it well. So, the

internet is extremely important.

[31] **Joyce Watson:** In light of the recent growth that you note in the rural tourism sector, what role do you think that the Welsh Government should have in developing that? You talked about the growth; what about the Government's role?

[32] **Mr Cole:** There are a few issues. In the end, the Government needs to intervene where, in the old phrase, there is market failure. None of us should be competing with services that are provided perfectly well by the market. I started my introduction talking about things like branding so on. One of the difficult things for individual businesses to do cohesively is to brand an entire country or destination. It is unfair to expect an individual business to do that. They often work to different timescales. If I talk to a local authority about tourism and I ask how things are, it might tell me that the budget for next year does not look too good, yet if I ask my colleagues in Visit Wales about tourism, they might say, 'In five years' time, it should be like this'. Then, if I ask somebody who is running a tourism business how things are, they might say, 'I have two people in tonight, but tomorrow is looking a bit dodgy'. They have a different timescale for dealing with things. The rest of us can help by providing the services that individuals find hard, such as collective branding, and in thinking ahead to what might be around the corner, what is coming, what might hit us between the eyes next and how we can take advantage of those things when they come by getting the right infrastructure and market development in place.

[33] There are still issues to do with quality and driving up quality. I think that you can do that most successfully with sticks and carrots. We have a successful grading scheme in Wales, but the other side of the coin is that, if you commit to upping the quality, there may be something to help you along in the form of grants or loans, to accelerate things. In the end, that, too, is about delivering the brand promise.

[34] Also, there are public realm areas and projects, some of which are just about creating nice places. We know from research that, in the end, however good an individual attraction is, and however good an individual accommodation provider is, what people love is just a nice place to be. Think of the towns of Llandeilo, Narberth, or Rhuthin; these are nice places to hang out. You might ask people what they have done, and they might say, 'We did not do much, but we had a lovely cup of tea; they had looked after the park, and there was a really interesting gallery with local pictures.' It is about creating nice places, and much of that falls to the public sector to support. Now and again, there are big infrastructure projects that are transformational in nature—I would put the National Botanic Garden of Wales in that category because, suddenly, people started to think about south-west Wales and gardens in the same breath when previously they might not have. It is those big, strategic interventions that create nice places.

[35] **Joyce Watson:** You have given us one example, namely the garden experience—I am a keen gardener, and I live in that part of the world—would you like to develop that thread as a good example of best practice, or do you have other examples that might not necessarily be Welsh that we could emulate or think about?

[36] **Mr Cole:** The national botanic garden is a good-practice model, because it was not just one development, it also sparked things such as the development of Aberglasney, the marketing of a number of gardens, the creation of the Tywi valley as a centre of excellence for garden visiting, and it also had a knock-on effect on towns and private investment in hospitality and accommodation. So, the whole thing worked as a package.

[37] Different, but of similar impact, is the Afan Forest Park, and I guess that that is one of those new rural areas that I was talking about. It is within an RDP area—it is an area of post-industrial forestry. There has been a forest park at Afan for an awfully long time, but it was

the advent of mountain biking—and the pursuit of the market sectors within it—that led to world-class mountain biking opportunities.

9.40 a.m.

[38] The Assembly Government has carried out targeted investment through Visit Wales, or the former Wales Tourist Board, in what are known as ‘tourism growth areas’. There has been a concerted effort to look at public infrastructure and to encourage private infrastructure. There are now dedicated hotels and guest houses within that area, catering for the needs of mountain bikers. They know that the guests will be muddy when they get back; they know that they will want particular kinds of food; and they know that they will want to be up early to get up the mountain. So, there is a whole package linking quality, skills, the right level of provision and the right level of trails and expertise. We are taking this on to a wider centre of excellence for mountain biking in the Valleys, embracing Afan, Cwmcarn and a new site at Merthyr Tydfil.

[39] Activity tourism is obviously very important for rural areas. Walking is the most popular activity in Wales. The trick with activity tourism is finding ways of making money from it. In the end, we are talking about the rural economy here, and how we ensure that there is money coming in. It is important that we up our range of services, that we up our range of quality, and that we up the opportunities for people to spend money in Wales. We have been a bit apologetic about this in the past. We have said, ‘Here you are: here are our lovely mountains; please have them for free, and we would love to see you again one day.’ We have done that rather than think of how we can develop the overall package, so that the accommodation provider becomes the host for the visit, the fount of knowledge for the visit, and the centre of the visitor’s experience, thereby allowing us to maximise the income from the visit.

[40] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you, Peter, for your evidence this morning. I wish to pick up on one thing that you said, relating to nice places to hang out. I thought that that was a very good point to hang your hat on, so to speak. This is quite a specific market in terms of attracting tourists, is it not? Wales has been promoted as a place to have a short break and enjoy the local surroundings. Are we succeeding in convincing people in some of the larger metropolitan areas in England, in particular, that Wales is a nice place to hang out for a long weekend or short break? That is a big driver of rural tourism, is it not?

[41] **Mr Cole:** Yes, it is. I guess that we are succeeding, but not to the extent that we would like. When you think about all of the people who live in the south-east of England, you can see that they have an enormous range of options. They can cross the channel and be in Paris in the same time that it takes to travel here by train. We are therefore in a very competitive market.

[42] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That is my point. If you are in the midlands, you have a host of international airports with cheap flights available to you. If you are in south-east England, you have the continent to consider. We can agree that there are many nice places in Wales. You used Llandeilo as an example; I know it well, and it is a lovely place, as is Cowbridge in my own region. Are we succeeding in the battle to try to bring people over here?

[43] **Mr Cole:** We are holding our own, but we could do a lot better. There are two prongs to this issue. First, there is the activities part—having a clear focus on particular activities. This is now a Visit Wales strategy and one that we should follow, as it is essential. In a sense, activity tourists are the pioneers—or the shock troops—in this. We need to get them to Afan Forest Park for some world-class mountain biking, for example. We know from research that there is not necessarily an enormous crossover between the activities of an adrenaline-driven activity visitor and cultural uptake at a destination. However, those people can be influential

when they go back to their homes and places of work. They can say, ‘I had a great weekend in Wales. You would not believe the fantastic mountain biking and the golf’, for example. That has an impact. They can influence others to take those things up. More important is hooking them in to the softer aspects of the experience. When people come to the Afan mountain biking centre, for example, and are staying at the Afan Lodge hotel, they will say, ‘The people there really looked after us. It was probably the friendliest place that I have ever been.’ It was also interesting to hear the response of visitors to the Ryder Cup. It was a mega-event, but people were amazed by the quality of the welcome and what was being done for them, despite the mud and the rain.

[44] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, you are saying that when people come to Wales, they enjoy the experience, but they are not coming in the numbers that we would like. Is that maybe because of a lack of integration in the support that is offered to the rural tourism industry in Wales by various Government initiatives? Is it a result of not joining up the strategies? You talked earlier about the cultural aspect of it and it now sits in the heritage portfolio, which has perhaps given it a little more direction. Is it that there is too much public sector involvement in trying to promote rural tourism, and that the private sector has not stepped up and taken up the challenge?

[45] **Mr Cole:** The private sector needs to play a greater part. That is the intention of the roll-out of the idea of destination management. It is not about a local authority or Visit Wales telling everyone what to do, it is about having a genuine partnership at a local level.

[46] To digress a little, you mentioned the Vale of Glamorgan, which has a strong marketing group that is led by the private sector. In one way or another, that has been instrumental in starting to develop reasons for people to come, such as the Cowbridge food festival, the music festival and so on. So, events play a part in giving people reasons to come now rather than at another time.

[47] The private sector is beginning to step up in the Brecon Beacons—which Kirsty would know about. A genuine destination management partnership is emerging there between the private sector, involving a strong tourist association, which is activity-led, as activities are very important in the Brecon Beacons, and which is working with the national park authority and the other constituent authorities in the park to look at offers. In the end, it is the private sector that can do the deal and that sells. We can provide a framework for it to sell, but it is the private sector that closes the deal.

[48] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, why is the private sector not closing the deal? You said that it is slowly stepping up to the mark—please correct me if I have misrepresented you. Does the public sector need to be more embracing and let go of some of the responsibilities that it has assumed over time, or is there just a complete lack of engagement? Are there some operators who are keen to get involved in the marketing aspect, whereas others just want to pedal their own boat and do their own thing?

[49] **Mr Cole:** There is plenty of willingness. As I say to colleagues sometimes, in the end, if you are in the public sector, you have to choose your rules of engagement with the private sector, because you have to understand that it costs money for a private sector operator to come to a meeting. It is all right for me, because I am paid; I am paid to be here today, and to go to meetings, and that is lovely. However, the private sector operator is paying twice. It is paying to come to listen or to join in with what we have invited it to join, but that is its time, and it probably has to backfill that time in its business.

[50] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It is fair to say that it might be an attitude issue; that is, the people who are running the public sector side do not necessarily understand what the private sector requires, especially in formulating that partnership. As you said, a day away from your

business results in a day's income being lost. In the longer term, if you get the strategy right, it could increase the income, but it is about making that transition in the interim, is it not?

9.50 a.m.

[51] **Mr Cole:** Yes; as with everything in our world, there are champions for particular areas out there who step up and take responsibility for a period of time. The Brecon Beacons is so successful because its tourism association has a very good leader. It is about getting the systems right and finding those stars or champions.

[52] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Turning to infrastructure in Wales, we heard evidence in our last session that transport proves to be quite a challenge for some people, particularly in being able to make use of a regular bus service if they do not want to use their cars. You touched on broadband as an issue, and previous witnesses have also mentioned the importance of having a broadband connection to promote their businesses and to facilitate bookings. What sort of ongoing Welsh Assembly Government activity is there to help rural tourism by developing a sustainable model of transport that would meet tourists' needs? Above all, what is being done with broadband to allow businesses to be engaged and to be able to market their products?

[53] **Mr Cole:** On the transport side of things, there is a sustainable tourism forum and action plan for Wales, involving representatives of the private and public sectors working together. Last year, the forum looked at transport for tourism and what could practically be achieved. Rather than consider pie in the sky stuff, it considered the things that we could be doing now, and a number of those initiatives are being rolled out with transport operators. My view is that that work needs to move along the chain a little; in our region, for example, we are working with the South East Wales Transport Alliance on a tourism transport plan. Although we would love people to be using more sustainable forms of transport for holiday purposes, we need to understand that the vast majority of our visitors are arriving by car and will continue to do so, because it is too easy. Our main market is England, so arrivals are likely to be by car from across the border. The trick is to get people out of those cars and to give them a choice, so that they do not have to worry about their cars on at least some days of their holiday. We need to tell them that there are other options, such as walking, riding or cycling. It is largely about sharing information because there are bus services and rural rail services in Wales. The networks are not as extensive as we would like, but we do not turn those that exist into part of the tourism experience.

[54] On broadband and information and communications technology, an European-funded Visit Wales-led initiative called 'Digital Tourism Business' is getting under way, which we hope will help to sweep up those who are not engaged at the moment, and those who are already engaged can take that engagement further. The idea is to create digital tourism communities; that is jargon, but it relates to my answer to your colleague about the power that individual operators now have through the internet and in talking to their customers. That power becomes a lot stronger if people are sharing information; it is part of helping a town, a wider destination or a country to understand that the competitor is not the guy next door—the serious competitors are further afield, as you have said.

[55] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Speaking of competitors, how can we identify what sectors of rural tourism are doing well at the moment and what sectors need a bit more tender loving care? Is it as simple as saying that adventure tourism, for example, has done pretty well over the last couple of years, cultural tourism is not doing too badly, but the longer stay vacation is more of a problem market? Can you discriminate between the sectors in such a simple way?

[56] **Mr Cole:** Not really; it is about a mixture of things, such as what a destination has to offer all round. It is also about what is going on in the more general economy. Tourism has proved to be a very resilient industry for Wales. Perhaps that is a point worth making when

we go back to think about which are the key sectors for Wales. In the end, a Welsh tourism experience cannot be outsourced—it cannot be off-shored; you can only have a Welsh holiday in Wales. That sounds very trite, but, compared with the other sectors that we put our faith in from time to time, it is remarkably solid. It has proved to be resilient because of the nimble-footedness of operators and customers. People will trade up and trade down.

[57] Interestingly, over the past couple of years, we have not had the enormous ‘staycation’ boom that people were talking about. That manifested itself in Wales and the UK generally in additional day visits rather than additional staying visits. So, places such as Hampton Court in London have had their best two years ever in the past two years, because, suddenly, people in the London area have started to rediscover their heritage, and it is cheaper to go to Hampton Court for the day than to go to the coast for the weekend.

[58] Rural Wales does not get that boost from day visits because, the further you get in Wales, the fewer day visits that you get, naturally, than you would get on the north coast or south coast of Wales. However, people trade up or down according to economic circumstances and family circumstances. So, we have seen fairly strong performances in things such as caravan and camping and self-catering holidays. Indeed, over the past two years people have often been staying longer in self-catering accommodation than in previous years. However, they are probably not spending any more than they would have done in previous years. They are looking for value for money and value for time out of their experience. So, it is very hard to pin down who is doing well and who is doing badly.

[59] Adventure activities have been doing extremely well. You have to be very careful there because activities go in and out of fashion. An activity that is fashionable now may not be in 10 years’ time. We will have to see what is around the corner. Surfing is very popular, but certain varieties of surfing are now getting more popular, such as kite surfing, which brings its own issues in terms of infrastructure and so on. So, it is hard to pin it down to one sector.

[60] On the cultural side, there are points that I would like to make before we finish. I know that we are up against the clock—

[61] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** You have about 10 minutes left.

[62] **Mr Cole:** Okay, that is lovely. On the cultural side, when you think about rural assets and tourism, it is very easy to see a read-across in some areas. It is very easy to see where food fits into the whole thing. Increasingly, that is a trend we have seen in tourism, where good quality food is being produced. It does not have to be at the high end of the market, just good food. People are asking about provenance; they are interested in where their breakfast comes from. Those things are becoming more and more important. You can clearly see the connection with rural life, food and other rural products, such as locally made woodcraft—

[63] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Chair, may I just ask another question? I know that I have gone on a bit, but it fits in to what you are saying. You are talking about food and niche markets that attract small-scale tourism, with people coming in ones and twos to appreciate those niche markets. However, earlier in your evidence you referred to Celtic Manor and the great welcome that people felt, but that is a mega-resort. Looking at the Scottish tourism market, for better or worse, they seem to be able to attract the mega-resort to quite isolated areas. Obviously, they have enormous resources to put into that, to develop infrastructure and to deliver marketing opportunities to their wider network. I appreciate that there would be room for only another one or two, but is there the ability to attract other Celtic Manor-type resorts to rural Wales that would have the super-tanker effect of driving that regional tourism market?

10.00 a.m.

[64] **Mr Cole:** Yes. There is nothing to stop that, other than the issue of whether individuals are prepared to invest. The Celtic Manor resort was one man's vision, and this often comes down to the vision of one man or one woman, in terms of what they want to see. A place like Gleneagles in Scotland is a similar kind of vision-driven development. So, there is nothing stopping it and in public sector terms—

[65] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The question that I am asking is: is it practical?

[66] **Mr Cole:** If the figures stack up for the person involved, then sure. However, there is a question mark over resort-type developments generally. I would not say it about the Celtic Manor because Terry Matthews is a Wales fan and is keen—in his own way—to create a sense of place at the Celtic Manor so that guests understand that they are in Wales. Having said that, there are a lot of resort developments around the world that look good in terms of the balance of payments, but do very little for local culture, local supply and so on. There always has to be a balance. Regarding mega-developments, there are a few Edwardian castles in north Wales that are pretty mega-developments. They come with a bit of history, in every sense. It is about exploiting those opportunities and considering things like the world heritage sites at Pontcysyllte or Blaenavon. It is about thinking about our cultural mega-developments and asking what we are doing with them.

[67] **Joyce Watson:** You referred earlier, Mr Cole, to the crossover of markets in tourism, which is what I was trying to get at when I asked my first question. I wish to address the cash value that tourism can have. The cash value of tourism in the nine rural counties is growing at a faster rate than in the non-rural counties, yet the economic impact and associated employment is growing at a slower rate in rural counties than in Wales as a whole.

[68] **Mr Cole:** There has been growth in rural areas, but not to the same extent as that seen in non-rural areas.

[69] **Joyce Watson:** That is right, but the rate of employment is growing slower.

[70] **Mr Cole:** Yes.

[71] **Joyce Watson:** Why is that?

[72] **Mr Cole:** There is a link between employment and overall performance, but this is also about the value that each visitor gives. Given that rural areas rely to a large extent on non-serviced accommodation, or rely less on serviced accommodation than a place like Cardiff, the added value that can be obtained from each visitor is more limited. If growth occurs in areas like caravanning, camping and self-catering, the desired employment numbers are not going to be achieved. However, you may get enormously important supplements to family incomes on places like farms, which are perhaps more hidden. On the face of it, there may not be a new job, but there is a family that is able to stay where it has always lived, which is also pretty important.

[73] **Joyce Watson:** Staying on the same theme, what specific value do you think that tourism adds to the rural economy, as opposed to the urban economy, if there is one?

[74] **Mr Cole:** If you look at the gross domestic product figures, you will see that tourism in Wales, in overall terms, accounts for about 7 per cent of GDP. In a place like rural Pembrokeshire, the figure is closer to 25 per cent; in proportional terms, therefore, tourism is a much more important industry in Pembrokeshire per head of population. A few years ago, a private operator there who ran a 10-bed hotel found that he was much more effective than a

city-centre hotel in Cardiff at providing economic value per head of the population in the area in which he was based, because he was buying and employing locally. The pounds that were being spent—albeit far fewer in number—were circulating much more freely per head of population within that area than would be the case with the Hilton in the centre of Cardiff, for example.

[75] **Joyce Watson:** I want to probe that further, because I am trying to tease out whether there is joined-up thinking on this issue. I live in Pembrokeshire, and although I do not praise Pembrokeshire County Council often, it has done an excellent job on promoting food. I know that tourism in Pembrokeshire adds massive value to the region. I see it all the time. With that in mind, is there joined-up thinking or connectedness between tourism and the county council on food, for example, which is a subject that I talk about often? I am not convinced that that is happening everywhere as it is in Pembrokeshire. It is about uncovering the hidden pound, and about adding value for the farmer, the butcher and the provider, all of whom employ other people. Much greater value can be added to tourism if people start to think locally but strategically.

[76] **Mr Cole:** Absolutely. Pembrokeshire has gone a long way down that road. There are pressures in any business, and with an issue such as food, it is not necessarily about a willingness to embrace local supplies but about how easy we make that. With food, for example, there are many local suppliers of one kind or another. How easy do we make it? What about continuity of supply? Where do people find their supplies? Do they have the skills to deal with the produce once it arrives at their front door? There is a whole range of such things to consider. It is down to us, in the support structures, to ensure that those connections are being made. They are being made in Pembrokeshire and Monmouthshire and are starting to be made in the Vale of Glamorgan and other areas. There is a whole culture around that, with farmers' markets and so on. In the end, a lot of the training work that we do is about creating a sense of place, and simple things can make a difference. For example, rather than writing 'Full Welsh breakfast' on the menu in a bed-and-breakfast hotel, it could state where the sausages, eggs and laverbread have come from. Putting a blackboard in the corner of the dining room listing the local suppliers encourages the visitors to think that they are getting something special. In truth, it is the food that all visitors get, but it adds to a sense of place and raises their curiosity, so perhaps they will visit Nicholas the butcher and buy some meat there before they go home.

[77] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** To sweep up this session, I thank you, Peter. It has been quite a long session of questioning, and we are grateful for all your answers. I conclude with one question about what could be done to enhance rural tourism, particularly what the Government of Wales could do to ensure that the public sector plays its part. You started by talking about the relationship between the regional tourism partnerships and local government, but what can the public sector do to enhance rural tourism, particularly during the off-peak season? We are not doing a tremendous amount to tackle that at present.

[78] **Mr Cole:** I started to talk about those things that fall naturally out of our rural assets linked to tourism, such as food, and then carried on. Accommodation and amenities are other aspects that naturally follow on, as are our environmental management and access activities.

10.10 a.m.

[79] The area in which we are perhaps weakest is that of cultural input. That holds the key for breaking down that stubborn seasonality that I described. It will be cultural events and engagement with rural communities on a cultural level that will encourage people to come at different times of the year, maybe at Christmas or new year, or on saints' days, such as St Dwynwen's. We can start to build events and activities around cultural aspects of rural life. It is difficult, because although I have mentioned some of the big bits of kit that we have out

there, such as the big blocks of stone, the big buildings and gardens, much of our culture is well hidden because it is inside us and is intangible. It is about getting together in the pub and having a singsong, or holding a local eisteddfod, sheepdog trials, the farmers' market or whatever. It is about having the confidence to invite visitors in to see what we do every day. That would be a useful way of going about it.

[80] I come back to the point that while tourism is in the Department for Heritage—and I say 'while', because it might change again one day—we should take full advantage by linking with our heritage colleagues to work on a full-ish events programme through the year. We should punctuate the year and ensure that the lights do not go out in October and come back on to welcome people back at Easter. People should be able to find out that Llandeilo has a shopping festival in February and decide that it is worth going for that. That kind of approach is the easiest thing that we can do.

[81] On destination management, I would ask all Assembly Government departments to throw their weight behind that, as we are doing at a local level.

[82] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** That has been a very useful session for us. We will take a couple of minutes' break now, and the Minister will be with us at about 10.15 a.m..

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.12 a.m. a 10.17 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.12 a.m. and 10.17 a.m.*

Ymchwiliad i Ffermydd Awdurdodau Lleol: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Local Authority Farms: Evidence Session

[83] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Symudwn yn awr at ein hymchwiliad i ffermydd awdurdodau lleol dan rent. Yr ydym eisoes wedi derbyn tystiolaeth yn y maes hwn. Er gwybodaeth i'r is-bwyllgor, cefais gyfarfod â'r Dirprwy Weinidog dros Dai ac Adfywio brynhawn ddoe i ddilyn y pwynt a godwyd gan dystion o sir Fôn am ansawdd rhai o'r ffermdai sy'n cael eu rhentu i denantiaid i weld a oedd y pwnc yn dod o dan ei chyfrifoldeb hi. Mae wedi cynnig rhai awgrymiadau, yn enwedig yn yr ardaloedd adfywio Môn a Menai, lle y gellid cynnal cynllun peilot i weld a ellir gwella ansawdd y ffermdai hynny. Bydd yn ysgrifennu at yr is-bwyllgor yn nodi hynny gydag ychydig mwy o fanylder, felly byddwn yn derbyn y dystiolaeth honno.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: We now move to our inquiry into farms rented from local authorities. We have already received evidence in this area. For the sub-committee's information, I had a meeting with the Deputy Minister for Housing and Regeneration yesterday afternoon to follow up the point raised by witnesses from Anglesey about the state of some of the farmhouses rented to tenants to see whether the subject came under her responsibility. She has offered some suggestions, especially in the Môn a Menai regeneration areas, where a pilot scheme could be conducted to see whether the quality of those farmhouses could be improved. She will write to the sub-committee to note that in a little more detail, so we will receive that evidence.

[84] Croesawaf y Gweinidog, sydd yma i roi tystiolaeth i'r ymchwiliad. Fe'ch gwahoddaf, Weinidog, i wneud sylwadau agoriadol a chyflwyno'r swyddogion sydd gyda chi y bore yma.

I welcome the Minister, who is here to give evidence to the inquiry. I invite you, Minister, to make some opening remarks and to introduce the officials who are with you this morning.

[85] **Y Gweinidog dros Faterion Gwledig (Elin Jones):** Diolch, Gadeirydd. Gyda fi y bore yma y mae Gary Haggaty,

The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones): Thank you, Chair. With me this morning is Gary Haggaty, head of the farm

pennaeth yr is-adran datblygu ffermydd, a Siân Hughes.

development division, and Siân Hughes.

[86] Croesawaf y ffaith eich bod fel is-bwyllgor yn gwneud gwaith ar ffermydd awdurdodau lleol. Mae'n amserol gwneud y fath waith, gan nad yw'r maes wedi cael llawer o sylw o ran datblygu polisi dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf. Gall fod yn fanteisiol inni fel Llywodraeth ac i awdurdodau lleol eich bod yn gwneud y gwaith hwn.

I welcome the fact that the sub-committee is taking on this work to do with local authority farms. It is timely to undertake such work, as it is an area that has not received much attention in respect of policy development in recent years. It may be advantageous to us as a Government and to local authorities that you are undertaking this work.

10.20 a.m.

[87] Yr wyf yn ystyried fod y ffermydd mae awdurdodau lleol yn gyfrifol amdanynt yn ased ar gyfer cymunedau'r awdurdodau lleol hynny, ac yn ased inni fel gwlad yn y pen draw. Fodd bynnag, yr wyf yn ymwybodol iawn fod pwysau ariannol cynyddol ar awdurdodau lleol ac felly y bydd pob un yn gwneud penderfyniadau gwahanol ynglŷn â sut maent yn blaenoriaethu eu rôl o ran eu ffermydd. O'r trafodaethau yr wyf wedi eu chael gydag awdurdodau lleol—rhai anffurfiol, ar y cyfan—mae'n amlwg fod nifer ohonynt yn awyddus iawn i gadw'r stoc o ffermydd sydd ganddynt, ac yn ystyried hynny yn waith pwysig iddynt fel awdurdod lleol. Yr unig awdurdod lleol a gefais gyfarfod ffurfiol gydag ef ynglŷn â'r ffermydd y mae'n berchen arno yw Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn, a digwyddodd y cyfarfod hwnnw rhyw ddwy flynedd yn ôl. Yr oedd yn ymwneud â'r buddsoddiad yr oedd Cyngor Ynys Môn angen ei weld, nid cymaint yn y ffermydd ond yn y tai ar gyfer y ffermydd hynny. Dyna pryd y gwneuthum i a'r Dirprwy Weinidog dros Dai, sydd erbyn hyn hefyd yn gyfrifol am adfywio, gychwyn ein trafodaeth. Bu ichi sôn am y llythyr yr ydych yn debygol o'i gael oddi wrth Jocelyn Davies. Mae rôl posibl i'w hadran o ran rai o'r awdurdodau lleol sydd eisiau datblygu a gwella ansawdd y tai sydd ar y ffermydd, gan fod hynny yn rhywbeth y mae'r Llywodraeth yn awyddus i edrych arno, ond mae adnoddau'r Llywodraeth hefyd yn gyfyngedig o ran hyn.

I consider the farms for which local authorities are responsible to be an asset for the communities in those local authorities, and, ultimately, as an asset for us as a country. However, I am very much aware that there are increasing financial pressures on local authorities and that they will all therefore make different decisions as to how they prioritise their role with regard to farms. From the discussions that I have had with local authorities—mostly informal—it is apparent that many of them are very keen to keep their stock of farms, and consider that to be an important part of their work as local authorities. The only local authority that I had a formal meeting with on the farms that it owns was Isle of Anglesey County Council, and that meeting took place about two years ago. It involved the investment that Isle of Anglesey County Council wanted to see, not so much in the farms, but in the houses provided for those farms. That is when I and the Deputy Minister for Housing, who is by now also responsible for regeneration, began our discussion. You mentioned the letter that you are likely to receive from Jocelyn Davies. There is a possible role for her department with regard to some of the local authorities who want to develop and improve the quality of housing on the farms, as that is something that the Government is keen to look at, but the Government's resources are also limited in this regard.

[88] O ran rôl y Llywodraeth, yr wyf yn ei weld yn bennaf fel rôl cydlynu a gweithio gydag awdurdodau lleol i ddatblygu arfer da a chyfleoedd ar gyfer cryfhau'r sector hwn, a rhoi cymorth iddynt gyda hynny. Nid yw

With regard to the Government's role, I see it mainly as a co-ordinating role and working with local authorities to develop good practice and opportunities to improve this sector, and to assist them in that regard. That

hynny'n debygol o fod yn gymorth ariannol uniongyrchol o fy adran yn y tymor byr, felly nid wyf am godi unrhyw obeithion ar y cychwyn o ran hynny.

[89] Yn y dystiolaeth a gyflwynwyd ichi fel is-bwyllgor, yr oedd yn rhywfaint o syndod imi weld fod yr ystadegau o CIPFA yn dangos y bu cynnydd yn nifer ffermydd awdurdodau lleol a chynnydd yn y tir sy'n eiddo i awdurdodau lleol ers 1999. Yr oedd hynny rhywfaint yn groes i'r hyn yr oeddwn wedi ei ddisgwyl, ond dyna'r ystadegau sydd gennym ar hyn o bryd, ac er ei bod yn debyg fod rhai ffermydd wedi cael eu gwerthu yn y cyfamser, mae cynnydd wedi bod mewn meysydd eraill hefyd.

[90] Terfynnaf gyda hynny a gadael ichi fy nghwestiynu.

[91] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr iawn, Weinidog. Mae'r ffaith honno yn ddiddorol, achos byddwn wedi tybio y byddai lleihad yn nifer y ffermydd a maint y tir sy'n eiddo i awdurdodau lleol. Yr oeddwn o dan yr argraff fod awdurdodau lleol yn ceisio gwerthu rhai o'r asedau hyn, felly mae'n ddiddorol fod cynnydd yn eu nifer. Yr ydych wedi dweud fod arian yn brin ar hyn o bryd, ac yr ydym yn derbyn hynny, felly i beidio disgwyl fod eich adran mewn sefyllfa i roi cymorth ariannol i awdurdodau lleol yn y maes hwn. Mae'n siŵr fod arian hyd yn oed yn brinnach ar ôl cyhoeddiad ddoe. Fodd bynnag, mae modd i Lywodraeth ganolog fod yn rhagweithiol yn y maes hwn, ac un o'r pethau a awgrymwyd inni yw y gall Llywodraeth ganolog hyrwyddo arfer da drwy edrych ar yr enghreifftiau lle gwneir defnydd adeiladol o ffermydd sy'n eiddo i awdurdodau lleol, a cheisio sicrhau bod rhywfaint o gysondeb yn eu defnydd. A ydych yn gweld fod rôl felly i chi fel Gweinidog a'ch adran?

[92] **Elin Jones:** Ydwyf. Yr wyf yn cyfaddef nad ydym wedi bod yn rhagweithiol yn hyn o beth dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf, a dyna beth oedd sail fy sylwadau cychwynnol. Efallai ei fod yn ddigwyddiad pwysig fod yr is-bwyllgor yn gwneud y gwaith hwn ar hyn o bryd ac yn rhoi sbardun i ni fel Llywodraeth i feddwl am y rôl ymarferol y gallwn ei chwarae, gan fod gennym ddyhead

is unlikely to equate to direct financial support from my department in the short term, so I do not want to raise any expectations at the beginning in that regard.

In the evidence submitted to you as a sub-committee, I was quite surprised to see that the statistics from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy showed an increase in the number of local authority farms and the land owned by local authorities since 1999. That was somewhat contrary to my expectations, but those are the statistics that we currently have, and although it is likely that some farms will have been sold in the meantime, there has also been an increase in other areas.

I will stop there and give you an opportunity to ask questions.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you very much, Minister. That is an interesting fact, as I would have assumed that the number of farms and the amount of land owned by local authorities would have decreased. I was under the impression that local authorities are trying to sell some of these assets, so it is interesting that there is an increase. You said that money is tight at the moment, which we accept, so we should not expect that your department could give financial support to local authorities in this regard. Money is probably even tighter after yesterday's announcement. However, central Government can be proactive in this area, and one of the things suggested to us is that central Government could promote good practice by looking at the examples where constructive use is made of local authority-owned farms, and trying to ensure that there is some consistency in their use. Do you see that there is such a role for you as Minister and for your department?

Elin Jones: Yes. I admit that we have not been proactive in this regard over the last few years, and that was the basis of my opening remarks. It may be an important event that the sub-committee is currently undertaking this work as it encourages us as a Government to think about the practical role that we can play, given that we wish to see local authorities maintaining and developing

i weld awdurdodau lleol yn cadw a datblygu'r asedau hyn i'r graddau y gallant.

those assets to the extent that they can.

[93] Gan nad oes gennym gyllid penodol i'w cynorthwyo i wneud hynny, yr ydym, felly, yn ystyried beth yw ein rôl o ran gweithio gyda hwy i ddatblygu syniadau ar gyfer cydweithio a rhannu arfer da. Fel y dywedais, mae gwaith yn dechrau yn Ynys Môn gydag adran Jocelyn Davies. Gwn hefyd am waith cychwynnol mewn ardal arall, sy'n edrych ar ddefnyddio'r asedau i greu ynni adnewyddol y gellir ei werthu i'r grid er mwyn cael tariffau bwydo i mewn, yn ogystal ag edrych ar sut y gall yr awdurdod lleol weithio gyda'r tenantiaid i greu ffynonellau ariannol ychwanegol o ynni adnewyddol.

As we do not have specific funding to help them to do that, we are therefore considering the question of what is our role in working with them to develop ideas for co-operation and sharing good practice. As I have said, work is starting in Anglesey with Jocelyn Davies's department. I also know of work that is starting in another area, which is looking at using those assets to create renewable energy that can be sold back into the grid in order to get feed-in tariffs, as well as looking at how the local authority can work with tenants to generate additional sources of income from renewable energy.

[94] Felly, mae rôl i ni, nad ydym efallai wedi bod yn ei chwarae dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf, ond y dylem ei chwarae yn y dyfodol, sef gweld pa opsiynau sydd ar gael o ran rhwydweithio a rhannu arfer da. Ein cyfrifoldeb ni fel Llywodraeth yw cydlyn hynny.

Therefore, there is a role for us, which we perhaps have not played over the past few years, but which we should play in the future, in looking at the options that are available for networking and sharing good practice. It is our responsibility as the Government to co-ordinate that.

[95] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yr ydych wedi cyffwrdd ag awgrym arall a wnaethpwyd yn y dystiolaeth yr ydym wedi ei derbyn, sef bod rôl yma o ran cydweithio â'r sector breifat—ac yr ydych wedi awgrymu hynny—yn enwedig mewn ardaloedd adfywio, sydd ym maes cyfrifoldeb Jocelyn Davies. Gobeithiaf y bydd y llythyr y bydd yn anfon atom yn nodi rhai o'r posibiladau hynny. Felly, yr ydych yn gweld bod rôl gan Lywodraeth Cymru o ran cydlyn, gan gyfeirio at arfer da a'r posibilrwydd o sicrhau rhyw fath o bartneriaeth gyda'r sector breifat hefyd.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You have touched on another suggestion that has been made in the evidence that we have received, namely that there is a role here for working with the private sector—and you have suggested that—especially in regeneration areas, which fall within Jocelyn Davies's area of responsibility. I hope that the letter that she will be sending to us will note some of the possibilities in that respect. You see, therefore, that the Welsh Government has a role in relation to co-ordination, referring to good practice and the possibility of putting in place some kind of partnership with the private sector as well.

[96] **Elin Jones:** Gan mai asedau'r awdurodau lleol ydynt, mae'n bwysig inni edrych ar sut y gall yr awdurdodau lleol fenthyg o bosibl yn erbyn yr asedau ar adegau er mwyn buddsoddi'n helaeth ynddynt. Efallai fod rôl inni weithio gyda'r awdurodau lleol ar fodolau ar gyfer gwneud hynny. Ar hyn o bryd, gall yr asedau hynny ddraenio adnoddau'r cyngor sir yn hytrach na chael eu defnyddio fel modd i godi arian er mwyn buddsoddi'n ôl ynddynt. Felly, mae rôl inni o ran gweithio gydag awdurdodau lleol er mwyn datblygu rhai modelau posibl

Elin Jones: As they are the local authority's assets, it is important for us to look at how the local authority can perhaps borrow against those assets in order to invest in them significantly. Perhaps there is a role for us in working with local authorities on models for doing that. At the moment, those assets can be a drain on the county council's resources rather than being used as a way of raising finance in order to reinvest in them. So, there is a role for us in working with local authorities to develop some possible models for that. We would want to do that in

ar gyfer hynny. Byddwn eisiau gwneud hynny mewn partneriaeth ag awduroadau lleol; ni fyddwn eisiau creu'r argraff ein bod yn sathru ar eu traed yn hyn o beth, oherwydd, yn bennaf, eu cyfrifoldeb a'u dewis hwy yw ymgymryd â'r gwaith ai peidio.

partnership with local authorities; we would not want to create the impression that we are stepping on their toes, because it is, primarily, their responsibility and choice as to whether or not to undertake the work.

[97] O ran datblygu cytundeb gydag awdurdodau lleol bod rôl inni ei chwarae, nid ydym wedi cyrraedd y pwynt hwnnw, ond gobeithiaf y byddant yn gweld mai ein rôl fyddai darparu cymorth ac nid gorfodi. Byddai'n rhaid inni fod yn ofalus nad yw hynny'n gosod cyfrifoldebau eraill ar awdurdodau lleol, oherwydd mae eu hadnoddau o ran staff ac yn y blaen yn brin iawn yn y maes hwn.

With regard to developing an agreement with local authorities that we have a role to play, we have not yet reached that point, but I hope that they will see that our role would be to provide help and not to impose. We would have to be careful that that does not place additional responsibilities on local authorities, because their resources in terms of staff and so on are very scarce in this area.

[98] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you, Minister, for your evidence so far. I want to seek some clarification. When I read the evidence, I, like you, was surprised at the increase in acreage—or in hectares, in new money—of about 2,500 acres, as I understand, if there are about 2.4 acres to 1 hectare. Where has that land come from? I was not aware of any local authorities that are actively purchasing land across Wales. In addition, how does the department define an 'equipped holding'? Is it just to do with a holding number, or is an equipped holding a commercially viable holding? Not only has the acreage gone up, but the number of equipped holdings has as well.

[99] **Elin Jones:** Those are not our statistics; they are statistics from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. So, I do not know what is meant by 'equipped holdings'. I do not know whether Siân would know.

10.30 a.m.

[100] **Ms Hughes:** An equipped holding is a holding that has housing for animals, dwellings, and so on, whereas bare land is literally just the land.

[101] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I appreciate that distinction, but I thought that, when you put it like that, it was quite an odd turn of phrase—'equipped holding'.

[102] **Ms Hughes:** It was merely the information from the statistics that are available to us.

[103] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I think that the explanation, Andrew, is that these are figures for England and Wales, and the average figure for Wales is based on the England and Wales figures. When the figures were first given to us, we went back and asked the Members' research service for revised figures. I would not place too much emphasis on these figures, because my understanding is the same as yours—that local authorities are selling off these assets rather than increasing them. I do not think that these figures support that to any great extent. I am looking at Nia here to make sure that I am right in this.

[104] **Ms Seaton:** [*Inaudible.*] Initially, CIPFA published the figures based on an all-Wales average, and we went back to it, because we had done our own survey of local authorities which showed a decline. We questioned it and it gave a revised figure for Wales which showed a decline—not a large decline, but a slight one—based on the figures for Wales.

[105] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you for that clarification. It is important because, given the average land price for the last decade, it would be an investment of about £12 million in the estate. We have talked about housing not being in a good state, and whether holdings are viable, but if they were putting in £12 million to acquire the land, you would have to think about the strategic view of the estate. That is one of my questions: how do you work with local authorities? Obviously, the local authority owns the estate, but how does the Government work co-operatively, shall we say, with the local authority to take a strategic view of the estate and perhaps to enhance some of its new entrant policies, and perhaps giving tenants the opportunity to diversify?

[106] **Elin Jones:** I would not want to say that we have worked with local authorities in any strategic way over the last few years, if at all—either as the Welsh Government or, previously, as the Welsh Office—in looking at these estates as a national asset. In the main, it has been left to the various local authorities to manage their own estates. There is a strength in that, because different local authorities have different political priorities and it is important that, as a Government, we are not too heavy-handed in our work with them. Having said that, I am aware that some council tenants have been successful under the current young farmers entrants scheme, but only a handful. I cannot tell you the number, but I want to stress that it is not too many, although I was really pleased that some had been successful under that scheme. It is an issue that I am keen to progress so that we are able to identify tenant farmers, whether they are local authority or private tenant farmers, as suitable applicants for and recipients of the young farmers entrants scheme. I do not want to overplay the role that Government, or even local government, should play in strategically defining what the content of the farm management should be for the different council holdings, because, to an extent, we need to allow the tenants themselves the flexibility to develop their holding.

[107] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I appreciate that point, and I would be the last to say that the Government should be interfering in the economic direction that a tenant is taking on a particular holding, but there are two sides to this, are there not? You have touched on the new entrants side, but there is also the succession side, and the sub-committee has taken evidence that farmers are pretty poor at succession planning. I include many people that I know, and indeed my own family, in that—they think that they will never die, and will live forever. There is not a smooth transition. I know that the Government has taken certain steps under TAN 6 to allow for housing, if you like, so that the young person can stay on the farm; is that sort of strategic help via TAN 6 a way that the Government could look strategically at initiatives to help that progression to county farms and keep the sustainable nature of the county farms structure going? It relies on succession, does it not, and on putting new people in?

[108] **Elin Jones:** There is an inherent tension in local authorities and council farms between the need to allow the council farm estate to be seen as part of getting young farmers onto the ladder of farming, and giving them opportunities to enter farming by securing short-term farm tenancy, and getting the turnover in order to allow more people in. It is about where those people go if they are on short-term tenancies. Is it better for council farms to have a longer tenancy, but what happens when those farmers are aged 65 or 66, as they will have to be after 2020? I guess that local authorities probably manage this with a mix of farms—quite small ones, large ones, longer term tenancies and shorter term tenancies, so that they have a mixed portfolio of opportunity for their potential tenants.

[109] Part of the problem, as you have identified, if we want—as I would want—farmers to retire at 66, and allow a new generation to come in, is that they are living in those premises as well as working on them. Where do they go and live after that? Maybe that is an area of work where we need to think, along with the local authority, about that succession in terms of where those people go to live after they retire from their farm. Whether into social housing or new housing under technical advice note 6 is something that would have to be discussed, but

certainly from a Government point of view, there has been no strategic thinking on this. I am not sure whether there needs to be that level of strategic planning by Government on this, but it is something that the local authority needs to continue its dialogue with its tenants about. Ensuring that turnover is quite important in terms of the viability and the original intention of these council farms, which was always to provide the opportunity for newer people and farmworkers to enter the farming industry.

[110] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** As I understand it, you have a role as defined in section 42 of the 1970 Act. Do you see your role being enhanced or becoming more strategic in working with local authorities to develop a more sustainable model for the smallholding estate? It is very much for them to be doing what they think is in the best interests of their own estate in their area. Government, as and when asked, should intervene, but are you happy as a Minister to allow what has gone on before to continue in the future?

[111] **Elin Jones:** I have said that it may be opportune now to look at the role of Government, working with the Welsh Local Government Association and the local authorities that have a specific interest in this area of work, to see what co-ordinating role or facilitation role the Assembly Government could play with local authorities in various aspects of work. I have identified some in my opening statements. The issue about turnover is another one that may feature in that, but only if the local authorities want the Welsh Government to play a role in this. I do not want this to be seen as any kind of imposition by the Welsh Government in straying into territory that is ultimately the responsibility of the local authorities, as long as they are not negligent in their duty, in which case, I have a duty to intervene, but I am not aware of specific negligence at this point.

10.40 a.m.

[112] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I would not make an accusation of negligence in any shape or form, but the sub-committee might wish to consider looking at the Vale of Glamorgan as a good example of what happens to a county smallholding estate when it is disposed of. The county smallholding was disposed of in 1997 or 1998, and it would be a good model to show what a complete waste of a resource that was. It was obliterated overnight. If you ask it where the money has gone, it could not even tell you. That was a 2,500-acre estate that went overnight. So, with regard to local authorities, perhaps consideration should be given to a duty of governance and a duty to give assistance.

[113] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Andrew, perhaps you would consider submitting a short paper based on your experience and knowledge of that.

[114] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Yes.

[115] **Joyce Watson:** I am going to move on, because you have already answered some of the questions I was going to ask. What action have you taken to encourage national and regional economic strategies to recognise the importance of local authority farm estates?

[116] **Elin Jones:** I do not want to pretend that I have taken any action on this in the past two or three years. Again, it is primarily a matter for local authorities to identify their farms as assets that they want to develop as part of their economic or regional planning. It is primarily their role to identify whether this is an area of work that they want to see as part of their regeneration potential. I spoke earlier about my meeting with Ynys Môn authority, where the councillors and officials were particularly keen to keep hold of the farm estate. As well as the council holdings, they are responsible for a suite of farms that are held in trust by the local authority. They identified that as an asset for them and the fact that it was also possible for them to look at how they could use that asset. They certainly need to invest in it, and in the housing in particular. They were looking at how they could generate a project around that that

would enable local builders and contractors to benefit from the work. They are now in discussion with the Môn a Menai regeneration partnership, which is working in that area, because it is an identified regeneration area. However, primarily, these ideas and the importance attached to the roles of these farms in regeneration need to come from the local authorities themselves. They need to identify them as a priority.

[117] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you, Minister. You have already mentioned some success in ensuring that tenants of local authority farms access farming schemes. You talked about new entrants; to what extent has consideration been given to ensuring that local authority farm tenants are eligible to access farming schemes, such as Glastir?

[118] **Elin Jones:** They would certainly be eligible if they are able to sign up to five-year management agreements. Gary, do you want to say anything more on that?

[119] **Mr Haggaty:** There is a huge amount of information out there at the moment. We are holding various events across Wales to which we invite people to come along to understand what the scheme could do for them. Of course, the people we are talking about today have the opportunity to come along. As the Minister has mentioned, provided an individual on a holding is able to prove to us that they have five years' management control of the land we are able to consider an application for them to come into Glastir, and we would certainly welcome applications from those people.

[120] **Joyce Watson:** Okay, that is fine. Evidence submitted to the sub-committee has highlighted some of the wider benefits that local authority farms can have in terms of education, access, affordable homes and action taken to tackle climate change. To what extent have you engaged with other Government departments to highlight the wider role of the local authority farm estate?

[121] **Elin Jones:** I may have already mentioned the discussions that I have had, and that this sub-committee is having, with Jocelyn Davies, the Deputy Minister for Housing and Regeneration. As I mentioned earlier, I am aware of one area in Wales where they are looking to see how they can engage in accessing feed-in tariff funding by using their council's farm estate to do that. That would be of benefit to the tenants in terms of cheaper electricity and income generation. There are areas of work here that we need to start identifying. It goes back to the points that were made earlier about a possible role for this Government if there are local authority areas or Assembly Government departments that are starting bits of work on improving the viability of these farms. That could be through renewable energy, or housing regeneration schemes, but we need to work with local authorities to develop best practice on that, and see how they can progress those schemes. It is not always the case that local authorities or officials will be talking to each other about what is good. Even Government departments occasionally fail to talk to each other.

[122] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you for that honest answer.

[123] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Going back to Glastir, the sub-committee has received evidence—although I did not hear it myself, because I was not on the sub-committee at the time—from people like Ian Whitehead and Nick Millard from Bruton Knowles, who indicated that, historically, agri-environment schemes had not had a high take-up on council farms. They said that they were not 100 per cent sure of this, because the evidence might be slightly fragmented, but, historically, given the size of some of those holdings, and their fragmented structure—they might have taken in outlying land, and so on—there might well be unreasonable obstacles to getting the points that would get you on to the schemes. Would that evidence be a fair assessment of agri-environment schemes historically? Have those points been taken on board for Glastir, giving consideration to the smaller size of farms in Wales?

[124] **Elin Jones:** I will ask the officials to come in on that, but I do not think that we hold information on which farms receiving single farm payment or agri-environment scheme funding are council farms. There is no means of cross-referencing whether an applicant is a council farmer.

[125] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** You might have that information through farm audits and business plans. I have no knowledge that that is the case, but our papers mention specific evidence from witnesses that, historically, there had been barriers to getting on the agri-environment schemes.

[126] **Mr Haggarty:** I do not believe that we have that information, but we can certainly look at this and, if we have it, we can provide it to you. The point that I would want to make about Glastir is that we need to take into consideration the fact that it is a scheme that is provided and it is up to individual farmers to determine from a business perspective whether the scheme is right for them or not. It could well be the case that the sort of farmers that we are talking about have considered the agri-environment schemes that we currently have—and, hopefully, Glastir, which is about to become available—and decided that it does not suit their business model at this point. That is exactly what we would want them to do. I would find it surprising if none of them were currently in our agri-environment schemes, but I do not have that information here.

[127] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, no council farms are in agri-environment schemes at the moment.

[128] **Mr Haggarty:** I am not saying that; I am saying that I do not know. I said that I find it hard to believe that there are no council farms in agri-environment schemes at the moment.

[129] **Ms Hughes:** Some of the evidence that I have read suggested that smallholdings found it hard to become less intensive under agri-environment schemes. Obviously, they need to make money, so they focus on production. However, I want to point out that, under those schemes, we pay for income forgone, so because the person reduces their output to be less intensive, they will be paid for that, and should be no worse off. That really is not a barrier. As Gary said—

[130] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That was the case for the old agri-environment schemes. The new ones are not based on income forgone, are they? In some respects, it could become harder to sign up for these schemes.

10.50 a.m.

[131] **Elin Jones:** It is all based on income forgone. Given that Glastir has a range of options that a farmer can sign up to and that it is a five-year management agreement that is sought, it is designed for farms of all sizes. Tir Gofal might well have been a more attractive scheme for bigger farms, but Glastir is more flexible—believe it or not, Andrew—and able to accommodate the needs of some smaller council farms.

[132] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Is it right that, in order to get the maximum, you would have to live in an area that would have the higher rate prescriptions on Glastir? Large farms are not in the areas that would qualify for the higher rate prescriptions. Am I right to interpret it in that way?

[133] **Elin Jones:** You will have to explain that again to me.

[134] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** This session is not about Glastir. We have had the answer

from you that you do not have the information as to whether council tenants are accessing these schemes or not, Minister, so I do not think that we can pursue that. I am sure that you are interested, Andrew—

[135] **Elin Jones:** We do not ask that on our forms. If you want us to put another question on our single farm payment forms for farmers to fill in—

[136] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** No, I do not want to take any responsibility for putting more questions on those forms. I would like to see them shortened rather than lengthened.

[137] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It was just that that was indicated in the evidence given by those two individuals. It is entirely up to you what you do on this, Minister, but that evidence came to us.

[138] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Ar ddiwedd sesiwn fel hon, Weinidog, yr ydym fel arfer yn gofyn i dystion ‘Beth arall ddylai Llywodraeth Cymru ei wneud yn y maes hwn?’ Ni allaf ofyn y cwestiwn hwnnw i chi, fel Gweinidog, ond a oes gennych weledigaeth am rôl ffermydd dan berchnogaeth awdurdodau lleol yn nyfodol y diwydiant, ynteu a ydych yn credu mai mater i awdurdodau lleol yn unigol yw penderfynu sut maent yn defnyddio’r stoc hwnnw?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: At the end of a session like this, Minister, we usually ask witnesses ‘What else should the Welsh Government do in this area?’ I cannot put that question to you, as Minister, but do you have a vision about the role of local-authority-owned farms in the future of the industry, or do you believe that it is a matter for individual local authorities to decide how they use that stock?

[139] **Elin Jones:** Yr awdurdodau lleol sydd â’r prif gyfrifoldeb. Mae’n bwysig ein bod fel Llywodraeth yn parhau hynny, gan mai eu stoc a’u hasedau hwy ydynt. Wedi dweud hynny, yr wyf i fel Gweinidog, ac yr wyf yn ymwybodol hefyd bod nifer o awdurdodau lleol yn teimlo yr un peth, eisiau gweld y gwaith a’r adnodd pwysig hwn yn parhau o fewn eu meddiant fel y gallant roi cymorth i ffermwyr, a ffermwyr ifanc yn arbennig, yn eu cymunedau. Felly, oherwydd pwysigrwydd yr adnodd hwn i ardaloedd ar hyd a lled Cymru ac i Gymru fel cenedl, mae rôl i ni fel Llywodraeth edrych ar sut y gallwn gydweithio gydag awdurdodau lleol i ddatblygu arfer da ac adnabod cyfleoedd newydd ac ychwanegol i’r asedau hyn, fel eu bod yn fwy hyfyw yn economaidd i’r dyfodol. Nid rôl y Llywodraeth, yn enwedig o dan yr amgylchiadau ariannol presennol, yw canfod ffyrdd o gyllido’r ffermydd hyn, ond ein rôl yw edrych ar ffyrdd creadigol o ddenu buddsoddiad i’r asedau hyn i ganiatáu eu hyfywedd economaidd ar gyfer yr awdurdodau lleol a’r tenantiaid, sef y bobl bwysig yn y pen draw. Dyna fy ngweledigaeth.

Elin Jones: The chief responsibility lies with local authorities. It is important that we as a Government respect that, because they are their stock and their assets. Having said that, I as Minister, and I am aware that this is the case for a number of local authorities, want to see the retention of this important work and resource so that they can assist farmers, particularly young farmers, in their communities. Therefore, because of the importance of this asset to areas the length and breadth of Wales and to Wales as a nation, there is a role for us as a Government in looking at how we can collaborate with local authorities to develop good practice and to identify new and additional opportunities for these assets so that they are more economically viable for the future. It is not the Government’s role, particularly under the current economic circumstances, to find ways of funding these farms, but it is our role to look at creative ways of attracting investment into these assets in order to ensure their economic viability for the local authorities and the tenants, who are the important people at the end of the day. That is my vision.

[140] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch i chi **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you and your

a'ch swyddogion am eich cyfraniad i'r officials for your contribution to this inquiry, ymchwiliad hwn, Weinidog. Byddwn yn Minister. We will contact you in due course cysylltu gyda chi gyda'n hadroddiad a'n with our report and recommendations for hargymhellion ar gyfer ffermydd dan local-authority-owned farms. berchnogaeth awdurdodau lleol maes o law.

10.54 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[141] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Cynigiaf fod **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I move that

yr is-bwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y the sub-committee resolves to exclude the cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol public from the remainder of the meeting in Sefydlog Rhif 10.37. accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37.

[142] Gwelaf fod yr is-bwyllgor yn gytûn. I see that the sub-committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.54 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.54 a.m.*