

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1232
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/12201/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

13 July 2022

Dear Jack Sargeant MS,

Petition P-06-1232 Stop the proliferation of intensive poultry units (IPUs) by legislating and introduce a moratorium until this can be achieved

Thank you for your letter of 24 November 2021 to Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd regarding intensive poultry units. Your letter has been passed to me to reply as it refers to the production of planning guidance which falls within my portfolio.

Strong rural economies are essential in creating and sustaining vibrant rural places and communities. This is why Planning Policy Wales supports rural business diversification. Such diversification, however, is not at any cost, and national planning policy makes clear sustainable locations are required where there is no detrimental impact on the environment and local amenity.

Prior to the pandemic we reminded local planning authorities of the care needed when planning for intensive livestock development. Intensive agricultural units particularly pig and poultry farms, can affect both sensitive habitats and the local population. This is largely through the release of pollutants, including: ammonia; nutrients from manure, litter and slurry; effluent discharges; dust; odour; and noise.

Agriculture has largely operated outside the town and country planning system, but as agricultural developments have become more intensive, they are being dealt with more frequently by planning authorities. The increasing number of poultry units in Powys is an example where issues of cumulative effects and the carrying capacity of local areas arise.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Town and Country Planning Intensive Agriculture Working Group was set up to see if the planning system was looking at those impact in the best way possible. The pandemic interrupted the work of the group but guidance, such as Natural Resources Wales's (NRW) update to their ammonia assessment methodology, has been available to help local planning authorities determine applications.

NRW's subsequent announcement in relation to the performance of river Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) against tighter phosphorus targets has meant the work looking at all the agricultural planning impacts in the round has been refocused to solving the immediate phosphorus issue. The habitats regulations require a high degree of certainty that development will not damage the integrity of the river SACs. Consequently, a great many new homes, including affordable homes, are being prevented from coming forward.

There is no one answer to the phosphorus issue so work is needed on a catchment basis to identify the appropriate local solutions. The source of phosphorus varies in proportion across the different catchments with either agriculture or waste water treatment works being the largest contributors. On the rivers Usk and Wye (in Wales), modelling work undertaken by Dwr Cymru Welsh Water shows rural land use to be the largest source accounting respectively for 67% and 72% of total orthophosphate load.

I am still working towards a Technical Advice Note on Agricultural Development, something the Working Group was contributing to. Work will continue to prepare a draft document over the summer, with a view to public consultation in the autumn. In the meantime, I have not ruled out a block on new poultry development but will be guided by the evidence. The recently published RePhoKUs Project Report on the River Wye catchment, for example, is something I am looking at closely to identify what further action is required.

I will be attending the upcoming Royal Welsh Show with the First Minister and the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd for a summit to look at next steps to address the phosphorus emissions. The event will bring together the key stakeholders from the agriculture, development and water sectors together with regulators to identify the practical solutions needed to protect our rivers while allowing appropriate development to proceed. Also attending will be the chairs of the nutrient management boards we have established who will lead on identifying and delivering the appropriate local solutions. All parties are expected to compromise and play a full part in addressing this challenging issue.

The summit and further work being undertaken both nationally and by nutrient management boards will continue to look at the impacts from poultry units so that, in the longer term, decisions about need and location are taken in a fully informed way. This work will include considering whether further regulation of intensive poultry units, from pollution control and planning perspectives, is desirable.

Yours sincerely,



Julie James AS/MS

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