

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales  
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig | Climate  
Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee  
Ymchwiliad i ddyfodol Polisiâu Amaethyddol a Datblygu Gwledig yng  
Nghymru | Inquiry into the Future of Agricultural and Rural Development  
Policies in Wales  
AAB 05  
Ymateb gan Pori Natur a Threftadaeth (PONT)  
Evidence from Pori Natur a Threftadaeth (PONT)

**1. What are the fundamental outcomes we want to see from agricultural, land management and rural development policies?**

PONT would like to see policies and mechanisms that;

- support positive improvements in ecosystems, habitats and species populations making the natural environment of Wales more resilient in the face challenges such as climate change, pollution and invasive non-native species,
- support agricultural and local businesses by rewarding land management practices that promote improvement to natural resources (soil, air, water, habitats and species and the underlying geology) with realistic payment for this management,
- hold those who implement poor environmental practice to account for damage to environmental and social infrastructure i.e. retain the need for environmental protection of soils, water, carbon habitats and species,
- engage rural communities and farmers in delivery and monitoring and use existing expertise.
- support farming in a way that generates new local business opportunities that recognise and enhance the local environment and promote well-being.
- improve understanding of the importance of the environment in underpinning agricultural and business enterprises in Wales and build this value into the decision-making process
- environmental accountability akin to the current cross compliance mechanism needs to be built into any new scheme. No public money should be used to support activities which reduce resilience and harm natural resources including soil, air, water, habitats and species.

**2. What lessons can we learn from current and previous policies? What about policies elsewhere?**

- Current and previous agri-environment environment policies have focused on income foregone and therefore do not reward positive management that delivers a range of public services (ecosystem services).
- Agri-environment schemes have been too complex, unfocused and have not understood regional variation, as a result these schemes have alienated the farming community and failed to deliver significantly for nature conservation.

- Ecological monitoring of agri-environment is overly complex and model-based rather than determining what is actually happening on the ground at an individual site level. As a result, very little of the data collected can be used to report on the progress Wales is making towards international biodiversity or other targets. This is also a costly process which is difficult to understand to the layman.
- Government should learn to trust the farmers and land managers to undertake the required activity and involve them in the monitoring.
- Currently farmers face penalties for consequences beyond their control or minor breaches of agri environment prescriptions due to the inflexibility of the schemes. Conversely some activity outside schemes continues to disproportionately damage natural resources with no accountability.
- Currently the focus is on the prescription and not on the outcome or result, this means that neither farmer nor environment really benefit significantly.
- Future funding opportunities such as those offered by the current RDP Sustainable Management Scheme and the Sustainable Production Scheme offer real opportunities for farmers and other land owners and organisations to work together at a landscape scale to address key issues affecting natural resources and deliver long term management to help adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- There is a need to investigate results-based (payment by results) schemes for agri-environment which are in operation elsewhere in Europe. A result-based scheme can better motivate farmers to achieve greater environmental benefits and reduces the amount of paperwork and the need to demonstrate compliance with complex management prescriptions. Results-based schemes may rely on more on-the-ground monitoring but this monitoring is simpler, quicker and can include the farmer/grazier. Schemes in Ireland and Europe have demonstrated the use of much simpler targeted monitoring (see examples below)
- Results-based schemes can be designed to ensure farmers are paid for positive conservation action but are not penalised for missing targets which are affected by factors outside their control.
- For a results-based scheme to work effectively more focus is needed on providing advice to farmers on managing natural resources either through the employment of more staff within the agri-environment schemes or by funding other organisations, NGOs etc. to provide that advice.
- A report produced by the Institute of European Environmental Policy<sup>1</sup> stated the following benefits of results based schemes:
  - there is a much clearer link between payments and biodiversity achievement;
  - contracts with farmers simply specify the results required, rather than defining in detail the farm practices that should be carried out;
  - the 'production' of biodiversity becomes an integral part of the farming system;

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<sup>1</sup> **SUMMARY of Results-based Payments for Biodiversity Guidance Handbook**

Designing and implementing results-based agri-environment schemes 2014-2020. Institute of European Environmental Policy

- farmers can use their farming skills, professional judgement and local knowledge, rather than just follow instructions;
- farmers take 'ownership of the biodiversity results, and this can lead to improved public recognition of farmers' role in supporting biodiversity;
- they are easier to target because farmers select only the land where the biodiversity results are achievable.

Examples of results-based schemes include

- Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (BFCP) - Ireland  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/fiche/burren-farming-conservation-programme-bfcp\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/fiche/burren-farming-conservation-programme-bfcp_en.htm)
- Meadow bird agreement with agri-environment cooperatives – the Netherlands  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/fiche/meadow-bird-agreement-agri-environment-cooperative\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/fiche/meadow-bird-agreement-agri-environment-cooperative_en.htm)
- Species rich grassland (Artenreiches Grünland - Kennarten) (part of PAULa), Germany, Rheinland-Pfalz  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/fiche/species-rich-grassland-artenreiches-grunland-kenna\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/fiche/species-rich-grassland-artenreiches-grunland-kenna_en.htm)
- At the PONT conference on the 8<sup>th</sup> February Wolfgang Suske from Austria is giving a presentation on results-based schemes, Welsh Government officials are contributing to the conference

### **3. To what extent should Wales develop its own agricultural, land management and rural development polices or should it be part of a broader UK-wide policy and financial framework?**

- Wales has always designed its own agri-environment schemes and should continue to do this. In doing so Wales could seek to adopt a positive payment by results approach to agri-environment that rewards farmers for delivering nature conservation and wider natural resource benefits.
- The economic situation in Wales which is highly dependent on SMEs, tourism and agriculture and Wales will continue to require development funding to compete on the UK stage.
- Whatever happens in the rest of the UK rural development funding in Wales is essential to underpin our approach to the environment, local economy and well-being. The detail of how this funding is allocated should continue to be developed and agreed at a Wales level.
- While developing our own polices and schemes is important we should do this in the context of our UK and global commitments for nature.
- Ensure policies align and support Natural Resource Management Planning across Wales