

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM  
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig  
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-815  
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00669/20

Janet Finch-Saunders AM  
Chair of the Petitions Committee

Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

17 March 2020

Dear Janet

Thank you for your letter of 12 February regarding Petition P-05-815 – Control Rapidly Expanding Intensive Poultry Industry in Wales.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduces Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SNMR) and sets out a framework to achieve this as part of decision-making. I am satisfied that the existing guidance in Planning Policy Wales 10 (PPW) adequately addresses the need to consider pollution within the planning system. PPW requires planners ensure resilient locational choices for infrastructure and built development, taking into account water supplies, water quality and reducing, wherever possible, air and noise pollution as part of a SMNR approach.

The petitioners requested information on who is responsible for assessing the cumulative impacts of intensive poultry units. This responsibility lies with Local Planning Authorities at both the Development Plan and Development Management stages. It is acknowledged that capacity and expertise may be an issue for authorities which is why the Town and Country Planning Intensive Agriculture Working Group will be looking at ways to address this and recommend what robust technical advice and guidance is available.

In December 2018 I issued a statement outlining an intention to introduce a whole of Wales approach to tackling nitrate pollution. The aim of the measures proposed would be to reduce water and air pollution from agricultural sources including from all poultry farms in Wales, irrespective of size. The proposal would require nutrient management planning and prevent nutrient applications in excess of the nitrogen requirement of the crop. Field and holding limits would also apply. These measures would reduce losses of phosphorus and nitrates to waterbodies. It would also ensure all agricultural businesses in Wales would need to have sufficient land available to safely apply the nutrients being produced by livestock.

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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 effect would be to prevent over-intensification in localised areas. The spreading of poultry manure in high risk areas or during inappropriate conditions would be prohibited, reducing losses of nitrate and phosphorus.

The proposed measures would also contribute to reduced ammonia emissions, due to requirements specific to poultry manures. This includes covering poultry manure stored in field heaps, which does not have bedding mixed into it, and the mandatory incorporation of poultry manure into the ground as soon as practicable, and within 24 hours at the latest, when applied to bare soil. The proposed measures would form part of the regulatory baseline which will provide the foundation upon which future payments will be made. Future payments may be impacted if there are breaches of regulations.

The proposal is in line with the polluter pays principle as businesses operating in ways which present the greatest risk of pollution would see the greatest impact, whilst those already following good practice recommendations would be least affected. Consideration is being given to the substantial body of evidence relating to the proposal and the potential impacts before making a final decision.

Sustainable Farming and our Land set how future farm support will be designed around the principle of sustainability. The new sustainable farming payment will reward farmers for delivering sustainable land management outcomes, one of which is clean air. We are identifying what actions can be included in the future sustainable farming scheme to improve air quality. Although we are still at an early stage, the scheme could deliver the same or better environmental outcomes as lowering the environmental permitting thresholds.

We have taken on board the recommendations of Plantlife and we have set out in the draft Clean Air Plan what improvements we think are needed to lower ammonia emissions from farming. This includes working with Natural Resources Wales to explore the scale of the environmental challenge in the farming sector. The plan includes a mix of actions which can be delivered either by the new scheme or by legislation. I encourage the petitioners to respond to the consultation and give their views on our approach to reducing air pollution. They can respond to the consultation on our website: [www.gov.wales/clean-air-plan-wales](http://www.gov.wales/clean-air-plan-wales). The consultation ends on 10 March.

Sustainable Farming and our Land demonstrates our intention to support sustainable farms which make an important contribution to the economy, the natural environment and our rural communities. This includes us having the appropriate legislation to protect our natural resources. We have stricter ammonia thresholds for new and expanded poultry units than in England. This means poultry farms in Wales are more likely to have to carry out detailed assessments when applying for an environmental permit. We are also introducing regulations to tackle agricultural pollution and, through the Clean Air Plan, bring in other improvements to lower ammonia emissions from farming.

It is important these proposals are based on good evidence. Maps showing the size and location of poultry farms are a crude assessment because they do not take into account any mitigating measures or the housing system. For example, modern multi-tier housing produces much less emissions per bird. This is why we are working with Natural Resources Wales on whether our proposals in the Clean Air Plan and the Sustainable Farming Scheme need to be targeted more locally. We are also part of the Nitrogen Futures project which is exploring options for protecting habitats and species that are vulnerable to increases in atmospheric pollution. We will look to use the learning from this project when it becomes available later this year. Updates on the project are available on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee website: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/nitrogen-futures/>

Natural Resources Wales are currently preparing Area Statements which will set out a local evidence base for the sustainable management of natural resources. Local Development Plans, Public Service Board Well-being Assessments, National Park and AONB plans must *have regard* to this evidence. The evidence will be a material consideration for planning decisions.

Area statements will also identify the opportunities where working together can help us deliver the national priorities, build ecosystem resilience and make the most of the benefits Wales' natural resources and ecosystems provide for well-being.

Regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned centrally on the page.

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