



Food, Farming  
& Countryside  
Commission

## Wales Field Guide for Future Generations



*With no Royal Welsh Show this year, our cover photo remembers the beautiful native ponies that shape the Welsh mountain landscape  
Powys Moorland Partnership*







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# Foreword

It is a particular pleasure for me, as a Welsh farmer in the border county of Monmouthshire, to introduce the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission's Welsh report. It summarises the work we've done so far, with partners in Wales, showcasing a small selection of the many examples of innovative Welsh practices we've seen, and it sets out our plans for our next steps.

Running a UK inquiry, formerly headquartered in London, I am only too aware of the recurring need to remind people that the four nations of the UK have different arrangements and aspirations for food and farming, the environment, health and wellbeing, land use and rural policies, as well as diverging plans to tackle the climate and nature emergencies. Our Welsh report demonstrates this, with its focus on the progressive policy and legal framework in Wales, and, in particular, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, for which Wales is becoming justly world famous. We are hugely grateful to Jane Davidson, one of the architects of that Act, who leads the Commission's work in Wales, for the rich insights, experiences and leadership she has contributed.

But, as we all know, policy intentions mean nothing without real and sustainable change on the ground, for citizens and communities. This report tells the stories of the people, businesses and organisations who are already doing that hard work and who've contributed so generously to the Commission's deliberations and to our recommendations. Thank you

to all the contributors, listed in the acknowledgements, and the many others we've met on the way. Thanks especially to the report-writing team – Sophie Reid, FFCC's Country and County Inquiries lead, assisted by Isobel Shan and Jane Davidson.

In these unprecedented times, we finish not so much with more recommendations, but with fresh questions and a call to action. As I write, Wales is cautiously edging its way out of lockdown. It is too early to come to conclusions about the long-term impacts that the Covid-19 crisis will have on Wales, but it has already had critical and far reaching effects. So I'm pleased to be joining the Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs Minister's Green Recovery Panel, chaired by Sir David Henshaw, which will be focussing on practical and prioritised actions.

Political parties and policy makers are starting to prepare for the Senedd elections next year. This is a time for imagination, for courage and unswerving commitment to the radical vision and practical actions we need for a more sustainable future for Wales.

And I can't imagine anywhere I'd rather live and work.

Sue Pritchard  
Chief Executive

Food, Farming and Countryside Commission  
July 2020

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# Preface

The Commission's work is timely with so many challenges facing Wales at the moment. The loss of European farming subsidies post-Brexit is a huge worry to many Welsh farmers and to rural communities the length and breadth of our country. Covid-19 has highlighted both the lack of resilience in the Welsh food systems – whether that is in production, supply, distribution, development, import or export. Climate change is increasingly affecting our land and its management. Biodiversity loss is the greatest it has been in my lifetime.

But for each of these challenges, there are opportunities too: responding to Brexit could open the door to the creation of a new integrated food system for Wales, using existing tools such as public procurement to directly drive the increase of local provision. Responses to Covid-19 from food producers have been imaginative and there are community food networks' conversations about the way forward across the nation. Farmers are engaged in changing behaviour and practices to tackle climate change and nature degradation. Food – and the access to healthy, nutritious food – is back on the menu. Wales has a particular opportunity to respond to all these challenges in an integrated way through its unique Wales law, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Commission's work over the next three years aims to deliver well-researched evidence and proposals to deliver a system-wide and sustainable approach to food, farming and land use policy. We want your help to make this happen in Wales. We all have a stake in it. Let's use the opportunity in our small country to co-create a system fit for purpose for current and future generations.

Jane Davidson  
Chair of the Wales Inquiry,  
Food, Farming and Countryside Commission  
July 2020

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# Executive Summary

The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) was launched in 2017 as a two-year independent inquiry, funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, to look afresh at the food and farming system, the countryside and rural economies, and to help shape a vision of a more sustainable future. Our reports were published in July 2019 and have been widely endorsed.

With the continued support of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, FFCC is now an independent charitable organisation, shifting gear from generating ideas and recommendations, to helping to turn them into practical actions and sustainable change. Our work now is to help convene the leadership needed around the difficult issues, implement the recommendations from our UK-wide report *Our Future in the Land*, and direct resources and support for more resilient and adaptable places and communities around the UK.

The FFCC Wales inquiry forms part of a network of place-based inquiries around the UK, with others in Scotland, Northern Ireland and in three counties and regions in England. In the first phases of the Commission, the inquiry in Wales focussed on the new opportunities afforded by the distinctive Welsh legal framework, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, to make more rapid progress towards sustainable practices.

This new report explores some of the opportunities and challenges provided by this distinctive legal and policy context, as well as highlighting just some of the leading work already underway across Wales, from the structural to the hyper-local.

As political parties prepare to make their manifesto commitments ahead of Senedd elections in May 2021, we frame some of the questions to which we argue they should be responding. Principally, with the legal and policy tools at our disposal, how can we ensure that the ambition for the production of healthy, nutritious food – that everyone can afford to eat – can be delivered in better connected and more sustainable farming systems (including agroecology) and which fully integrate planning and decision-making about our land? Specifically:

1. *What structures do we need in government to ensure that decisions about food, farming, land use and rural communities are not taken in policy silos?*
2. *How can we strengthen the place of healthy and sustainable food systems in local decision making and planning?*
3. *What are the benefits of putting agroecology centre-stage in Welsh plans for the well-being of future generations?*
4. *What duties would the Welsh Government need to put on public bodies to speed up and sustain the scale of change needed?*

What is clear from previous work and from current conversations, is that there is considerable energy and momentum to ensure that there is collaboration across Wales, across sectors, bringing together bottom-up and top-down approaches, to leverage the existing policy mechanisms at our disposal in Wales and the increasing momentum of change we have seen as a result of Covid-19.

Our inquiry in Wales will work together with a wide range of public bodies, businesses, campaign and community groups, to develop a plan. We anticipate our work will be focused around four main themes:

- Ensuring that the need for fair and healthy food systems is integrated into thinking and decisions about well-being, land use and resources
- Investigating the potential for agroecology in Wales
- Enquiring whether all public spending is aligned coherently for Welsh policy intentions
- Explaining the resources needed for a just transition to more sustainable food and farming systems and flourishing rural economies.

Food Cardiff - Riverside



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# Introduction

The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) was launched in 2017 as a two-year independent inquiry, funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, initially in response to the UK's exit from the European Union, but also to look afresh at the food and farming system, the countryside and rural economies, and to help shape a vision of a more sustainable future. Our reports were published in July 2019 and have been widely endorsed.

With the continued support of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission is now an independent charitable organisation, shifting gear from generating ideas and recommendations, to helping to turn them into practical actions and sustainable change. Our work now is to help convene the leadership needed around the difficult issues, implement the recommendations from our UK-wide report *Our Future in the Land* – and win and align resources to make this happen in places and communities around the UK.

We appreciated early on that real change happens where communities and individuals with 'skin in the game' see the need for change and make decisions that are appropriate to the environmental, social, economic and cultural context. That work can be accelerated by joined-up policies, accessible and timely advice and the right networks for formal and informal learning.

In Wales, there is a unique legal and policy context which could be particularly useful. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the Welsh Government and its public services to put the well-being of current and future generations at the heart of their delivery. Through the Act, they are required to deliver well-being through seven goals – a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities, a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and a globally responsible Wales. They are also required to demonstrate five ways of working: thinking long term, fostering prevention, collaborating with others for better outcomes, integrating their response to the goals and involving those about whom decisions are being made. At county level, the development of statutory Public Services Boards recognizes the importance of joining up policy-making close to citizens and is providing some early opportunities to integrate well-being objectives; but even with the best will in the world, the corresponding shift in practice will take time.

The FFCC Wales inquiry forms part of a network of place-based inquiries around the UK, with others in Scotland, Northern Ireland and in three counties and regions in England. These inquiries have been initiated and developed with place-based partners, and have a remit to explore the issues relating to food, farming and the countryside as they relate to each county, region or country.



This means that all six of the detailed inquiries have developed in their own ways, responding to the questions that feel most relevant and urgent in each place.

In the first phases of the Commission, the inquiry in Wales focussed on the opportunities afforded by the distinctive Welsh legal and policy framework to make more rapid progress towards sustainable practices. With Carmarthenshire Public Services Board, and Menter a Busnes, we focussed on how public procurement could work more effectively to support the seven goals outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Supported by a procurement specialist from Cardiff University, the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board resolved to use the collaborative purchasing power of its statutory public sector partnership members to influence local food supply chains. Gwyneth Ayers outlines how Carmarthenshire County Council is approaching this through the Food Procurement Task Force later in this report.

Separately, a group of farmers, growers and producers in North Wales was established with the support of Menter a Busnes, to look at supply chain barriers. The inquiry therefore explored issues on both sides of the contracting relationship. This work fed into the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission's UK-wide report *Our Future in the Land*, which was published in July 2019.<sup>1</sup>

This new report explores some of the opportunities and challenges provided by the unique Welsh legal and policy context, as well as highlighting just some of the leading-edge work being undertaken across Wales, from the structural to the hyper-local. We finish by framing some of the questions we argue that political parties should be responding to when they make their manifesto commitments ahead of Senedd elections in May 2021.

Apples from Rhiw Las



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# Opportunities and Challenges for Wales

Wales has a varied topography, with upland and mountainous areas, lowlands, coastal areas and islands and a wetter climate than much of the rest of the UK. Agricultural land makes up over 80% of the land in Wales, much of which is grassland pasture and designated as 'Less Favoured Areas' under European Union designation. Urban development in Wales concentrates around the south and north 'corridors', with a large, sparsely populated, and poorly-connected central belt. Inequalities are writ large: from the vibrant City regions and university towns, the remote rural villages, to the post-industrial landscapes – Wales is still dealing with the lasting impacts of that history.

We are now facing the triple threats of nature, climate and health crises – to which we may now add Covid-19. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that we have just 10 years to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees, or face catastrophic global effects of rising sea levels, droughts, and poverty. In Wales, agriculture accounted for 12% of greenhouse gas emissions in 2016<sup>2</sup>, while monocultures, use of pesticides and removal of habitats and wildlife corridors disrupt ecological systems, reduce biodiversity and deplete soils on whose fertility we rely to feed us in the future. The National Farmers' Union (NFU) Cymru has committed its sector to a target of net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2040.

This is all happening as we negotiate an uncertain future outside of the European Union. Analysis from Locality shows that if the UK Shared Prosperity Fund maintains

the same budget as EU structural funds and allocates resources on the same proportional basis as the rest of UK economic affairs public expenditure, Wales could lose out by £2.3bn in public investment over six years<sup>3</sup>.

Farm-gate prices have been driven down under pressure from large retailers and an agenda of 'cheap food', without regard to the real cost of food (in environmental clean-ups, and in health service spending, dealing with the rise in diet-related ill health, for example). Farmers in Wales often earn little for their work and face an uncertain future as we exit the European Union, which will necessitate the renegotiation of international trade deals and the replacement of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Welsh agriculture reflects some of the negative effects of this subsidy system, which has played a part in driving unsustainable behaviour, including overgrazing, overstocking and the removal of trees. Rachel Lewis-Davies of NFU Cymru outlines what the future of Welsh farming might look like after CAP later in this report. The pressure on farmers facing such a variety of economic, environmental and political shocks, combined with the breakdown of many traditional farming support mechanisms, puts pressure on farmer mental health. Eirwen Williams from Menter a Busnes outlines the work of Farming Connect later in the report, whilst Abi Reader describes the experience of being part of Monmouthshire Dairy Discussion Group - farmers working together to support improvements.

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The food and drink industry is Wales' largest employer, yet farm workers and those working in food processing are often in precarious and low-wage work. High quality, nutritious produce is produced in Wales, yet poor diets mean that diet-related ill health continues to rise, causing misery to our lives and compromising our health services. Public Health Wales estimate that rates of obesity cost the health service £73 million per year; 1 in 8 children aged 4-5 are obese and previous data collection suggests prevalence increases as children get older<sup>4</sup>.

The amount of fruit and vegetables in the Welsh diet is falling, while Welsh horticulture produces just 3% of fruit and vegetable needs<sup>5</sup>. In response, initiatives like Peas Please (led in Wales by Food Sense Wales) and campaigns like Sustainable Veg Cities are trying to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables on our plates.

In realigning this system, activists and food citizens are organising to tackle the disconnect, including Food Manifesto Wales, Food Cardiff (part of the Sustainable Food Places programme) and Our Food Crickhowell. We hear from Jane Powell, Pearl Costello and Duncan Fisher from these initiatives later in the report.

This disconnect from how our food is produced is reflected in a wider disconnect with nature. Our UK-wide report *Our Future in the Land* recommended a National Nature Service as a way to harness the momentum amongst young people for change, providing meaningful work to restore nature. In the context of Covid-19, the call has been picked up by a consortium of employers and green groups led by Wildlife and Countryside Link, as a way to tackle unemployment

and work towards a green recovery. With Wales' distinctive approach to education, employment and volunteering, how could this idea be developed here?

The Welsh Government declared a climate emergency in April 2019. The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets out the legally binding target of 80% GHG emission reduction by 2050 with interim targets in 2020, 2030 and 2040. The combination of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Environment (Wales) Act could enable Wales to have ambitious climate policy, since both Acts take a long-term view, prioritising the needs of the environment and of citizens, including those unborn. However, even with this rigorous approach, the UK Committee on Climate Change identifies real challenges with agricultural emissions in Wales.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 also aims to ensure that the environment in Wales is managed in a more 'proactive, sustainable and joined-up way', at a range of spatial levels and puts a duty on public authorities to 'promote the resilience of ecosystems' and 'maintain and enhance biodiversity'. Part of the policy framework for the Act includes a way forward for the management of our natural resources, through a Natural Resources Policy and Area Statements.

Natural Resources Wales has been developing these Area Statements covering seven areas of the country, which outline the challenges in each area, what we can all do to meet those challenges, and how we can better manage our natural resources for the benefit of future generations. Key to this is engagement across all land users – Natural Resources Wales explains the approach in more detail later in this report.



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Farming can be at the forefront of initiatives to enhance biodiversity, through agroecological approaches. Agroecology means taking into consideration the relationships between plants, animals, people, and their environment – and managing agricultural land as a diverse ecosystem. Agroecology can make good on the duties to ‘maintain and enhance biodiversity’ as required by both the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Environment Act. This includes through practices such as: diverse polycultures and mixed farming systems using varied animal breeds; natural pest management encouraging ‘natural enemies’ and pollinators; restoring hedgerows and creating ‘buffers’ for wildlife and enhancing soil biota through use of crop rotation, cover crops and silvopasture.

Often, debates about how we use our land are framed in terms of competing interests, rather than how multiple benefits can be drawn from the land. Projects aiming to ‘spare’ land for nature and wildlife, through rewilding initiatives for example, have been contentious, bringing to the fore questions about how we decide which land is used in what way.

In 2010, the Welsh Assembly Government launched new planning guidance: Technical Advisory Note - *TAN 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* which introduced the One Planet Development (OPD) scheme. It enables people to acquire residential rights on agricultural land if they are prepared to live very low-carbon lifestyles and demonstrate over 5 years that they can earn half the Welsh average income from their activity on their land. It therefore facilitates imaginative use of land and pioneers new sustainable ways of gaining an

income from it. The policy was launched at the Royal Welsh Show as an encouragement, particularly for young people, to diversify land use in their communities. Erica Thompson of the OPD settlement Rhiw Las in Carmarthenshire describes her experience later in this report. Access to land for new entrants to farming continues to be a challenge, with many council farms sold off and high land prices and start-up costs representing significant barriers to entry. More opportunities for short-term tenancies are needed, alongside educational routes including apprenticeships. Joint ventures also offer potential to help with farm succession, and Eirwen Williams of Menter a Busnes outlines Farming Connect’s ‘Venture’ programme later in this report.

Other projects are also seeking innovative ways to engage local communities in their landscape, from Powys Moorland Partnership to the Skyline project’s bold question to the communities of Caerau, Treherbert, and Ynysowen: what happens if the rights to use all publicly owned land are transferred to the town? We hear from Catherine Hughes and Chris Blake about these projects later in the report.

The new challenge of Covid-19 has hit the food and farming sectors hard. The hospitality industry has been in limbo, uncertain about when and how they might be able to reopen. Producers, farmers and fishers who supply them lost markets overnight, forcing some rapid reworking of the supply chain to get food directly to people’s homes instead. Some producers have seen demand surge, having to adapt ways of working to cope with this demand, whilst remaining safe environments for their staff. We hear from Patrick Holden of Holden Farm Dairy, Carwyn Adams of Caws Cenarth

Cheese, Dafydd Gruffydd of Menter Môn and Emma William of Y Felin Mill in St Dogmaels. In addition, Wales' vibrant food festivals are affected by Covid-19 restrictions, delivering another blow for local economies. Nick Miller, who has evaluated the role of food festivals for the Welsh government, reflects on this later in the report.

Whilst Wales has a progressive enabling legal and policy framework, the Future Generations Commissioner's recently published Future Generations Report 2020 found that delivery on the ground does not yet reflect the policy ambition.<sup>6</sup> In 2018, in the landmark moment of the publication of the first Public Services Boards' Well-being plans, there was little consideration of food issues. The Socio-Economic Duty under the Equality Act has not yet commenced in Wales, due to disruption from Covid-19, but its focus on delivering better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage should be a key part of creating 'a more equal Wales' post-lockdown.

The recent report commissioned by WWF Cymru, and written by the University of Cardiff's Sustainable Places Research Institute, *A Welsh Food System Fit for Future Generations* highlights how our food and farming systems, as well as our land use and countryside could deliver across all 7 goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.<sup>7</sup> The report focuses on how to deliver healthy, nutritious food for all, in the face of shrinking resources and a growing population, while recognising that climate change and biodiversity loss are major challenges both globally and for Wales. It outlines the opportunity to design a food system that works hand-in-hand with nature. It demonstrates that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act provides

the vision and levers needed to achieve this transformation by facilitating a more joined-up approach across the food system by linking agricultural policy with health policy, connecting the food we produce in Wales with the food we consume. The food sector provides an ideal opportunity to demonstrate how a systems approach can re-localise our food production and consumption and promote shorter supply chains, generating multiple benefits for the local economy, environment, health and well-being.

In the final section of the report, we frame some of the questions we argue that political parties should be considering as they set out their manifestos ahead of the Senedd elections in May 2021.

#### FFCC's Principles for Change



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# Food Systems

## Supporting communities and producers in North Wales – Menter Môn

*With contribution from Dafydd Gruffydd, Menter Môn and Luke Prosser, KESS PhD, Bangor University*

Menter Môn is a not for profit company providing solutions to the challenges facing rural North Wales. Their varied programmes include support for businesses, the third sector, community groups and individuals, and they act as a key delivery partner for many local and national government initiatives, as well as helping to recover

and run previously under-used buildings and other assets. Their programme design is based on close engagement with the communities with whom they work, many of whom have been particularly affected by the impacts and restrictions of Covid-19.

Dafydd Gruffydd, Managing Director at Menter Môn says: “Menter Môn work across North Wales to provide solutions to the problems facing the region’s rural population. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have implemented a number of projects to support the region. Our Neges project is working with local producers, a local restaurant and the local councils to

Menter Môn - Support Welsh Fishermen





provide food parcels to those unable to access food during this time, our Agri Bank teams local farmers up with available local labour if they become ill and are unable to tend to their farms, and our FLAG project has been supporting the local fishing industry, to help fishermen bring their catch to market throughout this period. All these projects have demonstrated that through collaboration we are able to reduce the impact for our region of a major global crisis."

The Covid-19 crisis has had a devastating impact on the fishing industry, disrupting markets into hospitality in the UK and Europe. Menter Môn has been working with fishermen from across North Wales to develop new online markets (through a North Wales Fish Direct Facebook page) where fishers can post information about their catches, selling directly to local people. Customers can also post their requirements and location, matching customer and supplier at a local level. The project has helped to mitigate the worst effects of the crisis for local fishers, while providing local people with fresh, sustainable fish.

Luke Prosser, a KESS PhD Student (funded by Menter Môn) at Bangor University adds: "The work that Menter Môn has done throughout this pandemic has demonstrated the clear effectiveness of collaboration across sectors in being able to respond quickly and effectively to major crises. Covid-19 has had major and long lasting impacts on the food sector in Wales, but these can be minimised now and in the future by supporting local producers, refocussing available resources such as closed restaurant kitchens, encouraging knowledge sharing within the sector and by generating alternative routes to market."

## **Making healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of where people live – Food Cardiff**

*Pearl Costello, Co-ordinator - Food Cardiff*

"Food Cardiff is the city's local food partnership, representing major institutions, local businesses, charities, grassroots community groups and interested individuals. The partnership was formed in 2014 as one of the founding members of the UK Sustainable Food Places (previously Cities) network, which aims to make healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of where people live.

"Food Cardiff operates as a hub to connect people and projects; as a catalyst for change through local policy and campaigns; and a voice for wider change.

"A flagship example is the School Holiday Enrichment Programme, which was developed by the partnership, including Cardiff Council, public health dietetics, Healthy Schools and local businesses. The summer holiday programme provides good quality meals, nutrition skills, sports education and enrichment activities to children living in areas of need. After a successful pilot in Cardiff, the programme has secured significant investment to expand across Wales.

"Food Cardiff also helped pioneer the Veg Cities campaign, a movement to get local areas growing, cooking, selling and saving more vegetables. Large institutions such as Cardiff & Vale University Health Board, Cardiff Metropolitan University and Cardiff Council have made a pledge to serve more veg in canteens, establish veg stands and get more veg into school meals. Social enterprises are using 'wonky' veg to develop

## Food Cardiff



innovative soups and growing veg on council land to supply local businesses. Schools have developed Veg Power teacher packs and Peas Please parent packs, and Flying Start and community centres are supporting people to eat more veg through cooking classes, food parcels and increasing uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers.

“As part of the partnership’s 5 Year Food Security Plan, Food Cardiff worked with Cardiff Business School, Action in Ely and Caerau, Cardiff & Vale public health dietetics and Fareshare Cymru to establish Wales’ first Your Local Pantry. The pantry is a community-led food club which aims to improve household food security in a way which offers dignity and choice. The main supply is surplus food that would

have otherwise gone to waste, but Food Cardiff is also working with local businesses, allotments and community growing sites to supply fresh, sustainably grown food to the Pantry.

“The food partnership also acts as a catalyst to change local policy. Last year, Cardiff Council was one of the first local authorities to establish a holistic Food Strategy, to support Food Cardiff’s vision to enable everyone in Cardiff to have access to good quality, affordable food. The strategy focuses on 5 key areas for action – fostering food partnerships, tackling food inequalities, increasing local food production, eating out well, and food as a driver for prosperity.

“This vision has become even more relevant as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. Food Cardiff has been coordinating city-wide action to support vulnerable people and to promote the positive changes made in response to the lockdown. Food Cardiff convened a Covid-19 Food Response Task Group to coordinate, expand and amplify the incredible response happening across the local authority, businesses and grassroots groups. This began with emergency food distribution, but expanded to include a collaborative effort to get 14,000 vegetable plants and seed kits out to households in the city.

“Food Cardiff demonstrates how local food partnerships in Wales can significantly influence the food landscape of a local area, by creating a social movement for change.”

### **Ensuring public spending creates public value – Carmarthenshire Food Procurement Task Force**

*With contribution from Gwyneth Ayers, Carmarthenshire County Council and Jane Davidson*

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 treats health and well-being, social cohesion, environmental well-being and cultural well-being on a par with economic growth. One way to realise the vision of the Act is to harness the power of public procurement.

Carmarthenshire is the fourth biggest county in Wales with a population of 186,500, a substantial food producer and home to a concentration of public sector partners. This created an opportunity to see whether high level conversations among decision-

makers in the public sector could align their interests to secure additional social and economic benefits through smart public sector collaborative food procurement. The Carmarthenshire Food Procurement Task Force was therefore formed.

In November 2019 the Task Force were successful in their bid for £100,000 Foundational Economy Challenge Funding. The foundational economy provides those basic goods and services we all use every day – care and health services, food, housing, energy, construction, tourism and retailers on the high street. The funding will help develop the project to deliver on the outcomes of initial LEADER-funded mapping work, supporting the transformation of local public procurement towards a more citizen-centred focus on a local food economy, with the aim of building more employment opportunities on the way.

Whilst the Covid-19 crisis slowed things down – with project development staff redeployed into immediate Covid response issues – they have been able to start creating baselines and, as thoughts turn to recovery after lockdown, the project is beginning to pick up again. Initial work to map local food producers has also been useful during Covid-19 to show people where they can access local producers. A project officer supported by Foundational Economy funding is being appointed in July 2020.

The Task Force are currently engaging with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies who are supporting a review of procurement arrangements. They are also exploring the concept of food hubs, which could link together different food producers; either



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to gain access to new markets or to work together to supply larger contracts, thereby reducing the barriers to smaller producers and distributors.

Covid-19 has shown an appetite for change in both consumers and producers. Now is the time to ask how we can shift procurement approaches to support the local economy, especially as part of Covid-19 recovery.

### **Finding common ground through collaboration on a Food Manifesto**

*With contribution from Jane Powell, Food Manifesto Wales*

Food Manifesto Wales is writing a Food Manifesto to help shape the food system in Wales. Set up in 2015, the group aims to find common ground through collaboration based on shared values, acknowledging healthy debate and recognising that there are some things that everyone can agree on. This 'energy for change' can then be harnessed to build a food movement, change perceptions, increase engagement and work with government to shape policy. They align with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act in recognition that food is part of all seven of the well-being areas – and is also a way of engaging the public as citizens in the democratic process.

The Food Manifesto highlights the disconnect between policy areas, with areas such as farming, health and business all discussed and decided on independently, when the evidence is overwhelming that these policies and functions are inextricable from one another. The Food Manifesto aims to bring together supporters and

policy makers across policy sectors, to work collaboratively and have the Manifesto reflected in policies. They are especially focussing on working from the bottom up, engaging and empowering the public, suppliers and community groups to work with local authorities and influence government.

The first draft of the Manifesto has 10 points, covering everything from worker and animal welfare to food security and environmental health. Such a wide-ranging manifesto may seem ambitious but it is only by acknowledging the interconnections between the factors that real change can be made. Unhealthy environments affect worker health; low wages reduce spending and stall local economies; disconnect from cooking/food skills result in poor diets – the effects of which link back to public health and local economies. The Food Manifesto not only aims to improve public and environmental health, but also create happy and healthy relationships with food, and point 8 aims for all children to leave school able to grow, cook, choose, buy and eat healthy food.

Food Manifesto Wales are now developing a second draft to include aspects of localism, resilience and self-sufficiency – the importance of which have been especially highlighted during Covid-19. Local producers have been adapting their supply chains to narrow the distance between themselves and their customers, while some local authorities have used the funding for emergency food boxes to support local food businesses. Food Manifesto Wales are therefore calling for local authorities to seize the opportunity to 'reset the food system'.

Realising the potential of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act involves community action and collaboration, but this can be hard to coordinate and kick-start without support. As the Manifesto is developed further it will be adapted to be more accessible to the public, written in clear and straightforward language and highlighting the shared values across sectors. Jane Powell, one of the team at the Food Manifesto, says “it is critical to engage the public in building a food movement, and we would like to see more support from government to help local action groups engage with policy.” The Food Manifesto welcomes suggestions and offers of support through their website.<sup>8</sup> They are also closely aligned with the Wales Real Food and Farming Conference.

### **Saving Welsh Cheese – Caws Cenarth and Holden Farm Dairy**

As the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Welsh cheese makers selling to the hospitality market found their customers disappear overnight, with their stocks of perishable cheese at risk of going to waste. We hear from Caws Cenarth and Holden Farm Dairy, who have averted disaster by finding new markets and have even seen signs of increased demand and interest in their cheese.

*With contribution from Carwyn Adams, Caws Cenarth*

In the valley of the river Cych, Caws Cenarth, run by Carwyn Adams and his family, has been selling traditionally made cheeses since 1987, but the family has been making cheeses for over 100 years. Drawing on this knowledge, they have been a big part of rekindling Welsh artisan cheesemaking. However, when the Covid-19 lockdown started, their business – largely in the hospitality sector – was instantly hit hard. Months’ worth of perishable goods were at risk of sitting on shelves and being lost. Through social media, Carwyn put out a call to cheese lovers, asking if anybody could help make use of this stock and the call was

Welsh Cheeses - Holden Farm Dairy, Caws Cenarth, Hafod



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most definitely answered. After 72 hours their entire stock was sold out. They were overwhelmed with orders, messages of support and even offers of donations.

As the immediate danger of losing the stock and uncertainty around arrangements for staff eased, Caws Cenarth, along with the rest of the nation, adjusted to life in lockdown. Some hospitality custom returned as businesses found new ways to cater to their customers. After such a positive reaction to the call for help, Caws Cenarth actually had to close for orders for three weeks to allow production to catch up with demand. This, along with a shift towards smaller orders and packages (rather than whole cheese wheels) has also allowed them to bring back more of their workers after initially having 50% on furlough. They were also able to tap into the crisis fund and local government grants.

Carwyn is passionate about keeping traditional methods of cheese making going, building skills and knowledge which can be passed on, to continue to produce delicious cheese. If these are lost, they are incredibly hard to bring back, requiring a huge amount of drive and determination to restore them. Carwyn believes that food festivals play a crucial role in providing people with opportunities to understand where their food comes from, linking together the beauty of the Welsh countryside and the strong Welsh food culture of producers and restaurants. They also help to make producers visible, in a world where large corporations' marketing budgets can undermine smaller producers and shorter supply chains.

*Patrick Holden, Holden Farm Dairy and  
Founding Director of Sustainable Food Trust*

"Covid-19 has been very challenging for many Welsh artisan cheese makers and Holden Farm Dairy is no exception. We are the longest established organic dairy farm in Wales where we produce Hafod, a raw milk cheddar style hard cheese from 80% of the milk of our Ayrshire cows.

"For the first month of the pandemic, our cheese sales more or less completely ceased; however since then we have enjoyed a progressive renaissance, with sales now nearly equivalent to those we were experiencing before Covid struck.

"We are grateful indeed to the cheese wholesaler community, notably companies like Neal's Yard Dairy, Courtyard Dairy and the Fine Cheese Company, all of whom have done their very best to ensure that our cheese gets to customers during this difficult time. As an example, the chef Jamie Oliver has been doing what he calls 'shout outs' as part of a 'Save British Cheese' campaign, with our Hafod cheese receiving a 'shout out' as part of the campaign.

"There is also no doubt that local interest has increased during Covid, with local box schemes showing interest in stocking our cheese. We believe that the lasting legacy of Covid-19 will be an upsurge of interest in local, regional and sustainably produced food.

"There are several factors which are driving this change, including increased interest in resilience and food security, the public making the connection between food quality and human health and a recognition that a widescale switch to sustainable farming is essential if we are to avoid irreversible climate change, biodiversity loss and future food security emergencies. All this should serve the interests of Welsh food producers."



## Y Felin Mill



### Showing the resilience of short supply chains – Y Felin Mill

*Emma Williams, Y Felin Mill, St Dogmaels*

“Since the start of the pandemic we at Y Felin have been inundated with phone calls and emails from local customers, new customers and people from all over the UK. Suddenly the flour from our 12th century mill was in such demand. I spoke to my Dad who had never known such an unprecedented demand for the flour in his 40 years of milling. And all the time we heard the same thing “we just can’t get flour anywhere”.

“We were too busy to question too much, and with the added demand for our flour came the added pressure on our long-standing suppliers of grain, hauliers, and packaging. Fortunately, we only use four family-run British farms who were able to provide us with an almost constant re-supply of grain to fulfil the demand. Our local haulage companies and packaging

were able to continue to supply us, as long-term customers. Having long-standing relationships with local and British suppliers truly proved invaluable at a time of national crisis.

“Despite everything being frantic, our ancient wheel could keep turning in its old familiar way, the water driving the mill stones to slowly grind the grain into the delicious stoneground flour. It was evident that the local picture was playing out at a national level, with our fellow millers in the Traditional Cornmillers Guild facing the same demands. All the time it had taken them and us to develop the personal relationships with our growers and suppliers meant we were all able to continue to respond rapidly and flexibly to help provide for our local communities. Across the UK, the old, time-honoured methods were both uniquely beautiful, and invaluable in responding where the large industrial mills could not!

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“With the upsurge in home baking, and with people unable to travel or not wishing to go to supermarkets, local producers and small convenience stores found new ways to collaborate to meet the needs of our local community, banding together to provide home deliveries to those self-isolating. Providing this staple ingredient offered much more than just good nutritional value, it allowed people to explore often forgotten ways of cooking or baking with families and children. Suddenly the mill was no longer an old historic building, it was revitalised and back at the heart of the community.

“Many weeks later, the situation is calming down. The phone doesn’t ring quite as often, the emails are slowing, and the customers are returning to the mill, re-opened in a new and ‘socially-distant’ way. It would be good to think that traditional mills have a place alongside larger, commercial mills that supply the supermarkets. During the pandemic, the smaller mills have been able to respond to the heightened demand and the capacity to adapt to change more rapidly than the large industrial-scale producers. It would be a fitting reward to retain the many new customers who have bought our flour during the pandemic. Only time will tell.

“Even though our contribution has been relatively small scale, there is real satisfaction in knowing that this has been possible and that our contribution has been so well received within our local community. It confirms our belief that a slower, more diverse food system is best for us all. The challenge now will be to build on the recent lessons and with Government leadership, support and investment, to change towards

a system built on shorter food miles and shorter supply chains, in order to create a more sustainable food economy which uses our resources more efficiently.”

### **Building a local food economy – Our Food Crickhowell**

*With contribution from Duncan Fisher, Our Food*

Our Food is an initiative with a vision to build a local food economy. Starting in Crickhowell, the project aims to increase individual and public use of local produce, boost local production and entry of people into food production, and ensure that locally produced food is high quality and produced using methods that tackle climate change. The project hopes to achieve a local food economy where people buy local produce and take pride in the local food culture. It is then hoped that frameworks and networks can be created to expand to other areas.

The project is inspired by the German example of Schwäbisch Hall, where an association of small-scale farmers in southern Germany created an alternative to supermarkets through a local food hall. This has grown to 1,500 businesses whilst still centred around local production, fair prices throughout the production chain and advocating for local farmers.

Our Food is responding to three crises:

- **Climate Change** – following the IPCC’s Climate Change and Land report recommendation to enhance local and community collective actions

Crickhowell



- **Local control** – moving reliance away from long and distant food chains to grow both supply and demand of local products
- **Depopulation** – tackling the mass exodus of young people from the Brecon Beacons due to lack of employment opportunity and rising house and land prices. Engaging young people both in the area and outside to start producing food.

Our Food is stimulating local food demand by promoting local producers and creating resources for people to find them when they need to. It can often be daunting to know where to start when trying to buy local, especially when people are used to the immediate convenience of supermarkets. They have therefore created a website to showcase producers, eateries and shops in and around Crickhowell, and are using social media to get the word out, ensuring a wide audience is reached. By creating profiles

for the producers and sellers they create a connection for the consumer and allow people to make informed choices about what they're buying – two things that are often lacking when buying from supermarkets and features that more and more consumers want.

They are now starting to invest in new, local farming projects and providing resources to help people learn how to grow their own food as well as 'how to start a farm'. Engaging local young people is important – many have not been able, or wanted, to learn the land-based skills that could be passed down in rural areas. Our Food are providing resources and support for entrepreneurs and innovators who want to start food-based businesses and holding public meetings to discuss how to adapt to market changes, providing much needed assistance at an uncertain time for food and farming businesses.



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## Raising awareness and driving demand for high quality produce in Wales – the role of food festivals

*With contribution from Nick Miller, Miller Research*

Ten years ago, Miller Research investigated the contributions of food festivals to the Welsh Economy. At the time, the network of food festivals in Wales could accurately be described as unrivalled in the UK, with Welsh Government supporting over 50 food festivals, championing Welsh artisan businesses and hosting their own Taste awards. Food festivals were incredibly valuable to the economy, with direct and indirect spending resulting from festivals equating to nearly £50 million over two years and creating 2,240 additional jobs.

However, since around 2014 there has been a shift in policy, prioritising turnover from exports. This means much support for food festivals has been cut, many have struggled to keep going and there has been a lack of acknowledgement of their value, both from

their contribution to the economy and also the sense of place that they can create for local communities, whilst contributing to the resilience of local food systems.

Food festivals across Wales are varied in size and type, including national signature events like Abergavenny and Conwy which bring significant tourism, mid-tier events like Aberystwyth and Narberth which are important outlets for local producers as well as attracting tourism, and community-based festivals which can stimulate growth in both demand and supply.

Food festivals at a local scale can be drivers for demand and awareness of the high-quality produce available in Wales. In theory this could help strengthen local food networks and raise demand for more frequent markets, providing outlets for direct selling from producers. Food festivals could play more of a role in food systems in Wales by extending their reach beyond the days of the festival. However, funding is a limiting factor here and it is important to remember that many food festivals are run entirely by volunteers. Maintaining relationships with the local community is therefore essential.

Abergavenny Food Festival





Much of the food produced in Wales is exported as raw materials, with less prioritisation of adding value to these products. Linked to this drive towards exports is the disconnect between what is grown, raised or caught in Wales and what is eaten. This is particularly striking in the case of fish, with much of the fish caught in Wales exported to European markets, whilst Welsh consumers buy fish which has been caught elsewhere. Food festivals can raise awareness and so boost consumption of these local supplies and strengthen shorter supply chains, which can have benefits for producers, consumers and the environment.

The restrictions of Covid-19 have highlighted the fragility of longer supply chains, with these systems suffering distribution problems. People have turned to more localised supply. But there is more work to be done around awareness of and access to these local businesses and supply. Many people want to support local businesses, buying healthy and sustainable food, but don't know where to go or struggle to afford what is available.

With food festivals being cancelled due to Covid-19 this year Nick Miller (Director, Miller Research) says: "The necessary cancellation of Food Festivals in 2020 is a significant blow to an artisan food sector which is already struggling with the closure of markets, shops and hospitality businesses. Many small food producers form part of a complex economic jigsaw in rural areas and the impact will be felt across many communities. We need to urgently develop more effective, technology-based, local supply chains to give food and hospitality businesses greater resilience in their routes to market. The festivals

themselves should not be ignored when it comes to support for rebuilding – they will need help to re-establish their valuable economic and cultural contribution in 2021."

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# Farming Systems

## **Reflecting on the direction for Welsh farming after CAP**

*Rachel Lewis-Davies, NFU Cymru*

“In the four years since the EU Referendum, there has been considerable debate about what will replace the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in Wales.

“Support delivered through this policy forms an important component of farm business incomes. In line with its objectives it supports the production of safe, affordable food for consumers; ensures farmers can make a reasonable living; helps to tackle climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources, maintains rural areas and landscapes; and keeps the rural economy alive.

“Given its significance, its replacement has formed the basis of not one but three of the most comprehensive consultations with NFU Cymru members in our history. In 2016 our members – farmers across Wales and from every farming sector – defined the principles and framework of measures for future food and farming policy.

“Paramount is a policy that secures safe, high quality, traceable food for our nation, supporting the active farmers who take the risks associated with food production. This needs to be an integrated framework of sustainable agriculture founded on three cornerstones of measures that reward and enhance environmental outcomes on agricultural land; boost productivity

by supporting investment in the latest innovations; alongside stability measures that underpin the continued delivery of food in an increasingly volatile world.

“Welsh Government has proposed, through two successive consultations, a policy focused on environmental outcomes and productivity. Concerns have amassed around the absence of measures to secure the continued supply of food. Unintended consequences have also been foreseen, with the polarisation of Welsh farming into areas of production and areas of environmental delivery.

“But in 2020 the world has changed. Covid-19 has touched all our lives. Empty supermarket shelves and ensuring food is provided to the clinically vulnerable have reminded us of the need for safe, high quality, affordable food as a basic requirement for every citizen. The overnight closure of our cafes, restaurants, pubs and bars have exposed the fragility and inequity in our food supply chains.

“Parallel to this, the concerns over the direction of travel of UK Government trade talks have manifested in over a million people signing our NFU food standards petition.

“These events have served to highlight that food security and ensuring a stable supply of home produced, high quality food for consumers is most certainly in the nation’s interest and should be a priority for governments. People care about the food

## Welsh Farm



they eat, how it is produced and where it comes from. Covid-19 calls for governments to learn lessons and reflect on the direction of travel.

“The question NFU Cymru has posed on the extent to which a policy focused on the delivery of environmental outcomes can also underpin the continued delivery of high quality, affordable food for consumers, alongside vibrant and vital rural communities remains highly pertinent and largely unaddressed. But it must surely be considered now.

“How Wales addresses this question will define farming for a generation or more. It will also define our place in the world. Climate change impacts are set to increasingly challenge global

food production systems. Rather than implementing policies that see food security and our agricultural productive capacity decline and our food requirements off-shored ‘out of sight and out of mind’, the ambition of Welsh farmers is to become world leaders in producing the most climate-friendly food in the world from a strong and improving natural asset base.

“NFU Cymru’s vision is for a pathway to a productive, profitable and progressive Welsh farming industry delivering the multiple objectives of ensuring a stable supply of safe, high quality food; supporting Wales’ economic recovery; maintaining and enhancing our environment whilst sustaining our rural communities and culture.”

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## **Farming Connect: supporting, informing and motivating the industry in changing times**

*Eirwen Williams, Menter a Busnes*

"Farming Connect is a high profile and high performing advisory service, with more than 23,000 individuals from Welsh farm and forestry businesses currently registered. It is also highly adaptable, as has become evident in the wake of Covid-19. The restrictions in force due to the pandemic have stalled the programme's comprehensive range of face-to-face services and training provision, as well as its usual presence at agricultural shows. But with over 30,000 views on the website and social media platforms for a recent week-long online 'Women in Agriculture' campaign and well over 1,000 hits a month on its recently launched 'Ear to the Ground' podcasts, Farming Connect is keeping in touch with its target audiences. Webinars, one-to-one digital 'surgeries' and remote group activities are part of an expanding range of online services and by adapting to the current situation, the programme is successfully staying connected with its beneficiaries.

"All services provided are either fully funded or subsidised by up to 80% and available in Welsh and English. Delivery is broadly categorised under three headings – 'Business', 'Land' and 'Livestock' with personal development as an overarching theme. Since the start of the current programme in October 2015, Farming Connect has delivered over 1,000 events and meetings a year, from one-to-one clinics to 1,500 attendees at the Diversification and Innovation Show in September 2019. To date 143 Discussion Groups have been established and they are all encouraged to benchmark their performance; the

majority using Farming Connect's 'Measure to Manage' tool. In addition to this, 153 Farming Connect Agrisgôp groups have been formed. Agrisgôp is a locally based 'action learning' project bringing together groups of individuals, who are supported by a trained facilitator to develop business ideas for new streams of income and support each other through change, growth and development.

"Farming Connect has a network of 18 Demonstration Sites, representing all farming sectors, united by a desire to improve performance and a willingness to share their learning and experience with others. Topics range from animal health and welfare to soil nutrient management and grassland strategies. One recent success was the launch of the Prosper from Pasture initiative. One farmer who participated noted that the programme had "changed his farming model completely" whilst another said that he has made "critical business decisions on stocking rate and winter feed budgets that has had a positive impact on farm efficiency".

"Acknowledged as being the 'go to' one-stop support organisation for farm and forestry businesses in Wales, Farming Connect's remit is to help its registered businesses to reduce outputs and increase efficiency, balancing the needs of environmental sustainability with efficient and profitable production. A comprehensive carbon delivery plan has been implemented across the whole range of activities. The programme prides itself in offering support for everyone – from young farmers trying to get a foothold to well-established, sometimes multi-generational businesses. The Farming Connect 'Venture' programme



## Farming Connect Agrisgôp Group



introduces established landowners wanting to step back or exit the industry to those trying to gain a foothold – giving many young farmers a much-needed helping hand.

“Farming Connect’s Advisory Service allows farmers to choose an approved consultant to deliver advice from business planning to nutrition, infrastructure, nutrient management planning and others. As a result of the advice, 93% state they have or will make changes to their business and 99% state that the advisor’s guidance assisted them in preparing a clear set of recommendations. Farmers learn from other farmers and to accelerate this process, Farming Connect has established a mentoring scheme with over 70 mentors representing a variety of sectors and specialisms. Eligible mentees can access 15 hours of fully funded mentoring with their chosen farming or forestry mentor. Farming Connect’s team of 18 locally based development officers are integral to the success of its delivery model. All

have a background in agriculture. Most are bilingual. Their local knowledge and contacts mean they are approachable and accessible as they signpost registered businesses to the package of services available. In 2019, all front-facing Farming Connect staff underwent mental health training, to help them identify signs of stress and encourage dialogue – much needed in an industry where so many individuals work in isolation and under pressure.

“‘Develop your personal skills, develop your business,’ is one of Farming Connect’s often-heard claims. It is at the heart of a programme which is helping transform the business performance of its beneficiaries. Numerous challenges lie ahead for Welsh farming businesses, from Covid-19, to Brexit, climate change, changing consumer habits and rapid developments in technology. The aim of Farming Connect is to assist farming businesses in Wales to adapt to the challenges so that they are effective, competitive and profitable.”

## Farming cooperatively for benefits to people and planet – Tyddyn Teg

Tyddyn Teg is a 31-acre farm, nestled in between the Snowdonian mountains and the Menai Strait. A cooperatively owned and run farm, they use permaculture and organic methods to supply the local community with food. Their reputation has spread and it has become something of a pilgrimage site for those interested in learning about community-supported, sustainable, organic methods of farming, with an international team and visitors from across Europe. The farm shares the risk of production with consumers by operating a membership scheme; they keep their consumer base local (members must come to the farm to pick up their weekly share of the crop) and keep their prices accessible. Having visited them on our bike tour in 2018, we caught up with Alice Gray to see how they have been getting on and how they have been impacted by the Covid-19 crisis.

*Alice Gray, Tyddyn Teg*

“Our business is going better and better as we all hone our farming skills and our co-operative working systems. We have now reached 150 members on the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) scheme and are turning over a substantial amount in our drop-in shop. We are working hard on putting together a business plan for a loan with the LEAP program to further develop our business and facilities; and we are hoping to reach 180 CSA members next year. Planned developments include climate-proofing with better irrigation systems (the drought was hard work to manage this year – we only came through thanks to the dedication of our team), expansion of intensively managed no-dig beds, expansion

Tyddyn Teg



of poly-tunnels, purchase of a new and less temperamental tractor, purchase of a power-harrow for better soil management, and purchase of a lot of terra-tek hand-tools for more efficient weed management. Our team is also expanding as we are looking to take on new members next year to help with all this work. Our waiting list is very long at the moment so we are not afraid of not finding a market as it seems that interest in local food is increasing all the time – particularly in light of the recent crisis.

“In terms of the impact of Covid-19, we are lucky to have an international team and thus we were in a way more tuned in to what was going on on the continent than other folks may have been and were able to move quickly to put in safety measures for our customers – even before the lockdown was announced.

“The business in our drop-in shop took off a bit, but we were able to keep up, thanks in large part to the excellent work of our supplier, Organic North, but also due to the early season we were having as a result of all the sunny weather. We made all our decisions as a team through a consensus process, and the sunny weather also helped us to socially distance with ease as all our meetings and meals could take place outside.”

Menai Bridge



### **Learning from each other to catalyse positive change – Monmouthshire Dairy Discussion Group**

*With contribution from Abi Reader, member of Monmouthshire Dairy Discussion Group*

The Monmouthshire Dairy Discussion Group was formed in October 2014, instigated by Farming Connect with funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme. The groups offer knowledge sharing but also opportunities to build targeted, individual farm plans.

Members were initially recruited for having the common aim of improving herd fertility performance, the most common inefficiency on dairy units. Milk records were used for benchmarking within the group, with the first meetings used to identify and quantify the fertility parameters of member farms and measure the financial impact of that performance. Regular meetings were scheduled to support the group farms in their objectives and to monitor progress. Fertility performance indicators were monitored, such as calving and inter-service interval, from which savings could be estimated. Over the lifetime of the project, the indicative saving across the group is around £203,600, equating to £94/cow.

Fertility benchmarking was an excellent foundation for the group to build upon and as the trust and dynamics within the group membership naturally developed, so did the ambition to widen its remit. Driven by the members and supported by a facilitator, the group has added other topics including: antibiotic usage and antimicrobial resistance; youngstock health and heifer replacements; soil health and nutrient management planning and alternative protein crops.



Covid-19 has significantly disrupted the group – and the dairy industry in general. The group has been unable to meet, although Zoom and WhatsApp have allowed members to stay in touch and help each other when necessary. The group's proposed Soil Nutrient Management Planning, which requires a technician to visit the farms, take samples, scope out the conditions and discuss action plans, had been held up due to the difficulty of arranging the visits across the whole group, affecting spring grazing and cutting. Covid-19 has further delayed this. Abi Reader, a member of the group, was disappointed to have her meeting with a soil expert postponed, especially with the rules to tackle nitrate loss in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones.

Covid-19 has had a large impact on production and demand for milk, with photos appearing in the media showing some dairy farms having to tip away large quantities of milk. Luckily Abi has

managed this thanks to a stable processor relationship, drying off some cows who were nearing their spring peak production and feeding excess milk to calves. However, even with these actions, she has still lost planned income due to reduced production. Experiences between members of the group differ considerably and other factors (including existing loans, impact of (b)TB and recent technological investment) have made this an anxious time for all.

Abi's hopes for the group are to have more meetings, and she is optimistic that remote ways of working will make this easier by reducing the time and money needed, although, she says, it's still nice to have face-to-face meetings sometimes. The discussion group has become a trusted forum where members can share day-to-day problems, challenges and concerns with their peers. The importance of this for well-being cannot be underestimated as the farming industry faces the challenges of a changing world.

Dairy Cows at pasture





# Land Use and Countryside

## A new approach for our land and resources

### *Natural Resources Wales*

“As a society, we all need to work together in new ways, adopting a more joined-up approach to find solutions to a range of complex challenges that we, and our natural environment, now face, including the climate and nature emergencies.

“The Area Statements embody this new way of working, applying specific Wales legislation to promote the sustainable management of Wales’ natural resources. Taking an evidence-based approach and working with a wide range of stakeholders, we have developed a better understanding of the key challenges facing our natural environment, what we can all do to meet those challenges, and how we can better manage our natural resources for the benefit of future generations. These are not static plans – they are a set of issues that need to be addressed collectively, and opportunities for what can be achieved if we work together.

“Natural Resources Wales (NRW) engages with farmers and land managers at the national scale through the Wales Land Management Forum, but with nearly 35,000 land holdings in Wales, involving every farmer in this process is always going to be a challenge. It is important for NRW to understand the ways in which farmers

communicate – the farming and countryside unions and the Young Farmers’ Clubs being key mechanisms for sharing information and listening to local farmer views.

“Recognising the importance of this, a national farming and woodland stakeholder event was held in October 2019 involving as many farming representatives as possible both at national and county level. Participants felt that Area Statements offer a real opportunity to do things differently: involving farmers from the outset; promoting cross-sectoral engagement and consensus building; developing the future Sustainable Farming Scheme; balancing local and national issues; and piloting innovative projects.

“Participants identified the need to work closely with multiple stakeholders to identify ‘common ground’, including:

- ensuring stakeholders such as Public Health Wales were involved in solutions
- ensuring that ‘local knowledge’ is considered equally alongside knowledge held by ‘experts’
- Improving personal relationships between government partners and farmers
- ‘Changing mindsets’ with agricultural colleges embedding sustainable land management in education.

“Participants also identified the importance of avoiding ‘one size fits all’ approaches – developing local schemes tailored for local issues, supporting the local economy, community and environment together.

“Participants highlighted that their core trusted networks were their own ‘close ties’ personal networks; their trusted friends/peers, technical groups and their local farming union (NFU Cymru, FUW) reps and members. Important social aspects were also provided from networks including: farmers’ markets; farm community networks; technical groups (grassland societies); farmers’ buying groups; farmer-led social clubs; Young Farmers’ Clubs and smallholders collaboration networks. Farmers were happiest in their own networks and generally did not feel comfortable going to the public sector for advice.

“Covid-19 has inevitably presented a challenge to our current and future engagement and the ongoing delivery of Area Statements. We are adapting our plans to the circumstances and exploring alternative virtual engagement tools such as social media and virtual workshops. We are also exploring the use of external facilitators, including Co-production Network for Wales to help shape dynamic relationships, developing links with the business sector and using online surveys. We are interested to know how the farming sector is adapting to social distancing restrictions and the risks that poses to the social networks mentioned above.

“The Area Statements published on 1st April summarise our work to date.<sup>9</sup> They cover the whole of Wales and respond to the different challenges presented within each spatial area: the industrial legacies of the more urbanised south and north-east to rural mid-Wales and uplands of the north-west.

National Resources Wales - North West Wales Area Statement Workshop



Common themes have emerged; sustainable land management features as a key area of focus in five of the Area Statements – and whilst it does not prescribe solutions, it shows a commitment to continue to work with the farming sector on finding sustainable solutions.

“In preparing this first iteration of Area Statements NRW has engaged extensively with stakeholders across sectors and at both the local and national level – but we recognise more involvement is needed. Engagement will continue as we move into the delivery of opportunities identified in the Area Statements. We want to focus on sharing experiences and learning from one another – acknowledging that no single group has all the answers. This will be Place-specific and may be different to the engagement to date, as we focus on key issues or themes or specific geographic areas. Building on the messages coming out of the October workshop and subsequent local events, alignment to existing networks and approaches rather than developing additional bureaucracy is clearly essential. It will require NRW to continue the conversation with farmers at all levels.”

### **Harnessing the potential of One Planet Development**

Erica Thompson lives at a cluster of four new One Planet Development (OPD) smallholdings in Carmarthenshire and chairs the One Planet Council, an independent voluntary organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting One Planet Development in Wales and beyond. When we met Erica on our bike tour and featured Rhiw Las in our report *A Fork in the Road*,

Erica told us what a radical departure OPD is from standard planning policy: the creation of new residential smallholdings in the open countryside, but with a long list of conditions and intensive monitoring.<sup>10</sup> Two years on, we caught up with Erica to see how things are unfolding.

*Erica Thompson, Rhiw Las and One Planet Council*

“On a personal level, things are going really well. We’re now in the fourth of our five ‘set-up’ years and well on the way to meeting all the requirements of the policy. Having spent eighteen months self-building our zero-carbon house (pictured), we’re now able to focus on expanding our food growing and OPD enterprise. We planted apple trees, which are now fruiting well, and we continue to increase our sales of honey and other produce. What’s also wonderful to see is the way that the site now supports such a wide variety of insects, and birds (even when they scoff all our redcurrants!) We’ve had a good lockdown, all-in-all – we have had to cancel courses and it has been a challenge to find



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new markets for our produce, but it's helped us really kick-start our growing and there's been a huge increase in demand for quality locally-produced food.

"From the point of view of the policy, things are more mixed. I think what we're seeing is dramatic success of individual smallholdings, with inspiring stories, but still a number of systematic barriers and scepticism leading to low uptake rates. Potential applicants have a perception that OPD applications are very risky, expensive and difficult; detractors have a perception that it is extremely easy, cheap, and just a 'loophole' to get planning permission. I think the fact that there have only been around thirty successful applications in the ten years since the policy was introduced, speaks to the reality. It is an intense process and not for the faint-hearted.

"So how can OPD help more people get into farming and local food production? Things are currently limited by the small scale. We are looking at creating marketing

networks so that OPD producers can work together cooperatively to sell produce and crafts. There's also an opportunity for new models of OPD, different from the individual-smallholding model that makes up most of the present cohort. We would like to see larger farms taking up the OPD challenge from a more 'conventional' background, Community Supported Agriculture groups using the scheme to create quality zero-carbon homes for their growers instead of the usual static caravans, and local councils looking to incorporate One Planet principles into new housing developments where existing settlements need to expand. So along with the obvious challenges, it certainly feels like an exciting time to build on the opportunities presented by the reimagining of food and farming post-Brexit and post-Covid."

Rhiw Las





## Exploring community land stewardship through the Skyline project

*Chris Blake, Director, Green Valleys CIC*



"Skyline, managed by The Green Valleys CIC, was a year-long project to explore the feasibility of landscape-scale, community land stewardship in Caerau, Treherbert, and Ynysowen – to create a shared vision for the next 100 years. This context is a landscape created by coal and steel, where isolated valleys are home to communities struggling to respond to the loss of industry, yet surrounded by publicly owned land – the forests of Welsh Government Forest Estate, legacy coal boards, and local authorities.

"The project asked: what would happen if a community had the right to manage the land that surrounds the town, for the long-term? What happens if we transfer to the town the rights to use all publicly owned land – to the skyline? We sought to answer one important question – do communities want to be stewards of their own landscape?

"Asking a question that has never been asked before is a difficult challenge. The possibility of community land stewardship had barely been considered. We started with artists to engage communities, breaking bread together, writing poetry, collecting dreams – but most of all we remembered and celebrated memories of place and of community. And from these dreams we started to create a vision.

"There were other questions we sought to answer. Are there sustainable business models that would allow communities to break free from a culture of grant dependency? Are communities able to manage the landscape in a way that enhances ecological resilience for the long-term? Can these projects be well-governed for the long-term? Going to visit community land projects in Scotland gave us knowledge and insight to start to answer some of these questions.

"I was struck by how residents of each valley instinctively balanced all the goals that are so often presented as being in conflict. Yes, they wanted jobs and prosperity – but they also wanted a more resilient environment. There was also scepticism, hardened over four decades of repeated policy failure, that any changes would make any appreciable difference to their lives. But Skyline sought to offer something different: control.

"But it all takes longer than you think. Nine months and our limited budget was not enough to develop a deep conversation with the community, or to reach the 'unusual suspects'. But through asking the question, we learnt that the power of land stewardship is in giving control to a community to shape their own landscape and through it their destiny.

Skyline - Treherbert



“Covid-19 has made this work seem ever more urgent. During Covid there has been a new focus on the local. We have looked to local communities for support, for care, for food, for exercise, for green space. Skyline is about re-localisation. About finding a way to provide jobs, education, nature where we live. We need to seize the chance to build back better and build back locally with communities in control.

“As Jane Davidson says about the project in her book *#futuregen*: “There is something fundamentally different about Skyline. This is not about communities having a project decided by others, applied to them. This is about communities galvanised into action by their own landscape. Once the final decision is made in each case about the land that will come under community stewardship,

a long-term lease will be agreed and a community land trust will be established that gives control over the landscape to the community for the long term. Early in 2021 the journey to a more sustainable future will have begun. The destination will be under the control of the community that wants to build a place to meet the needs of both present and future generations.”

## Engaging communities in the management of the moors through Powys Moorland Partnership

*With contribution from Catherine Hughes*

Funded through the Welsh Government's Sustainable Management Scheme for collaborative landscape scale projects, Powys Moorland Partnership was set up to improve areas of moorland, by engaging with farm businesses and local communities. Project Manager Catherine Hughes spent much of her time speaking with the various interests from owners, keepers and graziers to recreational and tourism interests. Catherine says "By engaging with all interested parties we can start to agree on 80% of what we want our landscapes to look like in the future, but it takes time and commitment to get the messages across. This collaboration is a new initiative; therefore we have to keep involving all interested parties and keep up the momentum and strengthen the story as we proceed – and more importantly demonstrate what the outcomes are through restoration of the ground. Engagement and more engagement and constant communication is key. School visits are hugely positive especially when the kids are so enthusiastic and feel able to ask any question they like. By having gamekeepers and graziers conduct the visits, our aim is to find solutions where our landscapes have a bigger and better story to tell. The children clearly enjoy having gamekeepers and graziers explain what and why they do what they do. It really can't be taught in the classroom. It also potentially inspires them to think of what they could get involved with in the countryside as a career."

The theme of storytelling in the moors was furthered by Powys Moorland Partnership's collaboration with Wayland Boulanger. Wayland tells the tales of Welsh histories and legends, with a focus on the Mabinogion. He joined the visits and walks on the moors, telling the stories as they went, engaging imaginations and creating a sense of place. Other educational and practical trips have also taken place, undertaking bird counts and working with organisations including the Wildlife Trusts. Local mental health charity Brecon Mind also led visits, providing eco-therapy and mobilising people who are not often able to get out to the moors.

Wayland Boulanger



The main three-year project finished at the end of March. Reflecting on the project, engagement from the visiting schools, charities and the hosting farmers surpassed expectations. The generosity of the farmers was impressive; they went above and beyond what was required of them – with both their time and knowledge. Catherine refers to the farmers as an 'untapped resource'; they have intimate connections with the land and can educate about ecology – habitats, migrations, population



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variations, interactions – even if they are not consciously thinking of it as ‘ecology’. The communities on the moors are complex, with land-owners often being different from the farmers and graziers. Land-users are often left out of conversations despite their knowledge, enthusiasm and the direct impact of initiatives on them, which represents a great loss both for education and policy making.

In terms of biodiversity, three years is not a lot of time to display a drastic impact, but it is enough time to mobilise and engage communities. This aspect has been a success, with schools and charities engaged and lasting connections created.

Powys Moorlands





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## Questions to Consider

Wales has taken some large legal steps towards committing to an integrated well-being approach to food and farming systems and how we use our land. Five years on from the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, however, it's clear that the law alone is not enough to generate the scale and pace of change that is required; more courageous and distributed leadership is needed, to support integration, both in shifting mindsets and thinking, and in guiding the required ways of working.

Our questions for political parties thinking about their manifestos are, given the legal and policy tools at their disposal, how to ensure that the ambition for the production of healthy, nutritious food – that everyone can afford to eat – can be delivered in better connected and more sustainable farming systems (including agroecology) and which fully integrate planning and decision-making about our land? Specifically:

1. *What structures do we need in government to ensure that decisions about food, farming, land use and rural communities are not taken in policy silos?*

Wales has done much already to create less siloed institutions. What can be learnt from this experience and what else is needed? WWF Cymru has called for a Wales Food Commission tasked with overseeing targets and performance of a food system strategy for Wales under one governance framework<sup>11</sup>. In addition, whilst national institutions will set the direction,

local governance structures will lead the implementation and test innovative practice. What should the interface between these levels of governance look like?

2. *How can we strengthen the place of healthy and sustainable food systems in local decision making and planning?*

Food is an essential way in which we engage with the world. If we start from a position that all people in Wales should have access to nutritious food, and that this should not come at the expense of animal welfare, the rights of workers, the health of the soil, the climate or biodiversity, then this needs to be taken into consideration in all decisions we make about how public money is spent and how we use our land. Essential to this will be increasing the amount of fruit and vegetables grown in Wales and ensuring that fruit and vegetables are an affordable part of people's diets. WWF Cymru report that 94% of children don't eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day<sup>12</sup>. Compounding this, we have a horticultural sector that provides just 3% of the country's fruit and veg needs, with suggestions that much more could be grown with little extra land needed<sup>13</sup>. Post Covid-19, we have seen that the absence of a resilient and diverse food system has consequences.

Should there be a requirement for Public Services Boards to consider food as an essential part of their Well-being Plans? How could food be made an essential part of decisions about land and resource use?

3. *What are the benefits of putting agroecology centre-stage in Welsh plans for the well-being of future generations?*

Agroecology means taking into consideration the relationships between plants, animals, people, and their environment. Farming using agroecological approaches offers us a way to gain multiple benefits from the land. It puts producers and growers at the front of the change that is needed, allowing them to care for and improve the land, the soil and biodiversity. But the transition to farming in this way is a risk for farmers and we need structures and resources to support farmers to make this change. With Welsh government acknowledging the importance of the Foundational Economy, what could be achieved by placing agroecology at the centre of our approach to food, and what other benefits might be achieved as part of creating jobs, developing and valuing the skills of producers and growers, promoting crop diversity, biodiversity, ecological pest management and integrated mixed farming as the basis of successful food production? Agroecology is also underpinned by ideas of social and economic justice, and a fair and equitable food system, making it consistent with the values and aspirations embedded in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

4. *What duties would the Welsh Government need to put on public bodies to speed up and sustain the scale and pace of change needed?*

Many of the legislative mechanisms include duties which apply to public bodies, ensuring that public bodies must think about how public spending can create the most value, but where in Wales, 'value' is redefined under the Well-being of Future Generations

(Wales) Act. We must also consider what role the private and not for profit sectors play. What more could be achieved in the interface between sectors, through public procurement initiatives at local, regional and national level or through the new Economic Contract as a mechanism to drive responsible business behaviours, including carbon footprint reduction?

Blossom at Rhiw Las



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## Next steps

With the continued support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for the next three years, we are continuing our programme of work to unlock a just transition towards sustainable food and farming systems, valuing our countryside, which builds on the evidence and momentum the Commission has already gathered. The planned programme of work includes three streams:

- Convening leadership and conversations on the difficult issues, for a just transition - from the climate crisis to post-Brexit trade
- Helping to implement our recommendations, starting with a land use framework, a ten-year transition plan for sustainable, agroecological farming, a National Agroecology Development Bank and the National Nature Service
- Resourcing more resilient and adaptable communities, supporting and learning with our country and county inquiries.

Our approach has been to involve and work with people and perspectives from around the country, travelling out to where they are, and appreciating the diversity of the UK countryside. We've worked closely with the different manifestations of leadership in our country and county inquiries, bringing different perspectives into conversation with each other and helping to develop and extend their work. Our work is also aiming to create real two-way flows of information between our UK-wide and international work and initiatives supported in the devolved nations and English regions and counties

where we work. As a Commission, this gives us the opportunity to learn from piloting our recommendations and support practical actions on the ground. For the network of inquiries, this is an opportunity to learn from each other and to coordinate and call for change at a UK level.

### **What's next for FFCC Wales?**

As part of the next phase of the Commission's programme, the inquiry in Wales will work to develop a three-year forward plan. We are working together with a range of stakeholders, to discuss this report and consider our next steps.

What is clear from previous work and from current conversations, is that there is considerable energy and momentum to ensure that there is collaboration across Wales, across sectors, bringing together bottom-up and top-down approaches, to leverage the existing policy mechanisms at our disposal in Wales and the increasing momentum of change we have seen as a result of Covid-19.

Through the process of bringing this report together, and discussing its themes with others, we have identified opportunities to collaborate and align our work to ensure that the sum of our efforts is greater than the individual parts. These include four main strands of work.

1. **Ensuring that the need for fair and healthy food systems is integrated into thinking and decisions about well-being, land use and resources.** Food matters to everyone; we think food should feature centrally as part of local land and resource planning. Alongside Natural Resources Wales, we will investigate how food can be incorporated into Area Statements. We will also show how food can deliver against the seven well-being goals, to ensure food features centrally in local Well-being Plans
2. **Investigating the potential for agroecology in Wales** – we think agroecological approaches to farming and land use allow us to gain multiple benefits from the land, produce high quality healthy food sustainably, improve farmers’ livelihoods and well-being, tackle the climate crisis, enhance biodiversity and improve the land for future generations. There is a strong case for farmers to be at the front of the change that is needed
3. **Enquiring whether all public spending is aligned coherently for Welsh policy intentions** – from public bodies across Wales using their buying power to support local producers and improve diets, to investing and aligning all public resources for greater public value. We will work to leverage distinctive Welsh policy mechanisms to make change more widespread
4. **Explaining the resources needed for a just transition to more sustainable food and farming systems and flourishing rural economies** – farmers, growers and land managers must be

resourced and supported to make changes and we will work with them to understand how to make this transition a realistic proposal, identifying and channeling alternative sources of funding and investment.

These are just some of the themes we hope to work on over the next three years of the inquiry in Wales. We will support existing initiatives to map and develop a strong and networked food, farming and countryside sector. We will work with the Food Policy Alliance Cymru, Natural Resources Wales, farming bodies, citizens action groups and other partners to enhance each other’s work, identify where there are gaps and help to find common ground.

The Commission’s work is evolving, in turbulent, uncertain and complex national and global conditions, and we will also hold the space open for those who want to work together, making the most of future opportunities as we work towards national renewal after the Covid-19 crisis.

Bara Menyn Bakehouse & Café





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160 City Road  
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+44 (0)20 7118 1870

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The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission focusses on food and farming, climate, nature and the public's health, for a just transition to a greener, fairer world. With partners in governments, businesses and communities, we generate radical ideas and practical actions to transform our countryside and our economy. We help convene collective leadership on the difficult questions and resource communities to become more resilient and adaptable for the challenges ahead.