

PET(4)-13-12 : Tuesday 2 October 2012
P-04-383 : Against NVZ Designation for Llangorse Lake

Note of Petitions Committee visit to Glan Aber farm in Dinbych, 1 July 2012

Related petition: P-04-383 Against NVZ Designation for Llangorse Lake:

'We call on the Welsh Assembly Government to overturn the proposed Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) designation on the basin of Llangorse Lake, which is likely to affect approximately 25 farm businesses.'

Present:

William Powell AM (Chair)
Bethan Jenkins AM
Joyce Watson AM
Owain Williams, farmer
Geraint Williams, farmer
Rhys Roberts, FUW
Abigail Phillips, Clerk
Sarita Marshall, Deputy Clerk
Annette Millett, Committee Support

1. The Chair thanked Owain and Geraint Williams for welcoming the Committee to their farm on a Sunday, and Rhys Roberts for his attendance.
2. The Chair introduced the Committee and invited the farmers to tell the Committee how their business had been affected by the NVZ designation of the area.
3. Owain and Geraint Williams explained that theirs was a 500 acre beef and milk farm.
4. Their farm had been included in a NVZ designated area 12 months ago. They had carried out nitrate level tests before the changes were made and the results were around 15. Levels were now down to 8. The farmers questioned the need for the NVZ designation as generally levels below 50 were considered good so the pre-designation levels should have been acceptable.
5. The farmers also felt that the designation had limited value given that water from surrounding farms runs into their land.
6. The farmers explained that the NVZ designation had necessitated a £70,000 to £80, 000 investment in the farm. The Welsh Government had offered grants for 40 per cent of the cost, but the farmers felt that the grant application process was slow and overly bureaucratic, although they were grateful for the help as they recognised that this was not available to farmers in England. They did not have a single point of contact during the process, but had to deal with several officials.
7. The farmers also felt they needed to employ someone to deal with the extra paperwork, which added to the expense. The day to day paperwork is also more time consuming for the farmers now.
8. They also felt that the nitrate levels should be dealt with through the Water Directive rather than NVZ designations.
9. They feel that the NVZ designation means that they are disadvantaged when competing with neighbouring farms.

10. They showed the Committee the slurry pit that they had significantly enlarged as a result of the NVZ designation. It was now four metres deep and approximately four times the length of the original slurry pit.
11. They explained that they had to change the way the manure was spread on the fields. The old method had been to leave the manure on top of the fields, but now they had to inject it into the earth. This was done by using an injector that attached to a farm vehicle. The injector had cost £35,000.
12. The volume of slurry stored and the need to inject rather than spread manure means that farmers now have to spend longer dealing with that aspect of the farm.
13. The Chair thanked Owain and Geraint Williams and Rhys Roberts for their time.

Committee Service

July 2012