

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig | Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee
Ymchwiliad i ddyfodol Polisiâu Amaethyddol a Datblygu Gwledig yng Nghymru | Inquiry into the Future of Agricultural and Rural Development Policies in Wales
AAB 09
Ymateb gan Elan Valley Tenants Association
Evidence from Elan Valley Tenants Association

Overview

This response will concentrate on the difficulties farming in an area with a compulsory designation. The Elan Estate covers approximately 18,000 hectares, most which is farmed by 28 tenant farmers. Many of the farms are in very remote locations with no access to mains electricity, broadband or mobile phone signal. Most of the Elan Estate is in the Elenydd 'Special Site of Scientific interest' (SSSI) which needs grazing to protect the landscape for future generations. The SSSI designation forced upon the farmers protects the land from any agricultural improvements as well any improvements to the infrastructure. No fencing is allowed so the sheep flocks are hefted to their own land, a process which has taken generations to develop but could be lost very quickly. The winters are long with high feed costs and it is extremely difficult work shepherding and gathering the sheep flocks for routine care. As well as the improving the delicate habitat the management of sheep on these areas also assists with carbon sequestration on the peat land. Unfortunately, due to the smaller lambs produced by the hardy Welsh Mountain sheep these flocks are unprofitable without financial support.

Future Policies

Any future policies need to financially support the dedicated farmers who manage the sheep and cattle on areas with the SSSI designation. The breeding stock sold from these mountains are an essential part of the Welsh sheep industry. Payments should not go to landlords or inactive farmers.

RDP

If smaller mountain lambs had improved marketing and promotion this could help the mountain sheep farmers.

Capital payments to improve the infrastructure, broadband and mobile phone services will enable businesses to be more innovative and efficient.

Planting and maintaining existing woodlands needs to be encouraged, Environmental Impact Assessments should be more flexible allowing farmers more choice and opportunity to plant trees on areas of land not suitable for other uses.