

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales

Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau/ Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

Bargeinion Dinesig ac Economiâu Rhanbarthol Cymru / City Deals and the Regional Economies of Wales

Ymateb gan CLA Cymru / Evidence from CLA Cymru

With respect to your Committee's inquiry, I am writing wishing to make some fundamental points about the potential impact of Swansea Bay City Region (SBCR) and the Cardiff Capital Region deals. I am most concerned about the lack of rural focus in these deals and raise concern about the policy behind these developments, the breadth of representation and the selection of benefiting projects that lacks commitment to depth and spread across the whole regions they serve.

The City Region Deals are focused on hi-tech innovation and investment many of which have been benefiting from public support for innovation development for quite some time. Some sectors of the economy do seem simply to be exempt from the Deals – possibly by dint of the departmental separation of agriculture and natural resources management from the economy – which has always created problems for initiatives that hover over the divide. Many opportunities exist in further developing the agricultural food-chain, creating and growing markets and developing export capacity. For the Welsh economy which is widely dependent on agriculture, natural resource management, their supply-chain and supporting services, this is a grave omission.

Your inquiry focuses on the two southern city region initiatives. However it should also ask questions about other parts of Wales and how the rural economy may receive structured benefit from any similar initiative. An opportunity may exist in rural Wales to develop a bespoke strategy with an emphasis on the circular economy maximising green growth.

You will recall that we have demonstrated how as much as £1.3 billion (the equivalent to the single investment into the SBCR which is spread over a longer period of time) is invested *annually* by landowners in Wales. We have also demonstrated how vulnerable this investment may be. In this critical period when uncertainty as to the replacement of the CAP places the rural economy on a knife-edge, I believe it is important that a strong and consistent rural economic strategy be adopted by Government – and that overtly it come across in the City Regions deals. I will be very pleased to meet you to further develop these observations or offer evidence direct to the Committee.