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2016
ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS
MANIFESTO 2016**



FUW 2016 WELSH ASSEMBLY ELECTION MANIFESTO

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Dear colleague

Ahead of the last Welsh Assembly elections in 2011, our manifesto warned of the unprecedented challenges faced by the incoming Assembly Members and Government.

Five years on those challenges persist, whilst others continue to add to their number. Yet the public funding available to address such challenges continues to fall against a background of numerous uncertainties, foremost amongst which is the possibility of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

With around 35 percent of Wales' population living in rural areas, the potential loss or watering down of what are currently EU policies aimed at supporting our rural communities and the agricultural businesses which lie at their heart should be a major concern for our politicians.

Yet rather than feeling that such concerns are being acted upon, and contingency plans being drawn up, there is a real worry within our communities that the focus is on bombarding individuals, businesses and public bodies with new and potentially costly legislation at a time when rural incomes are under severe pressures.

The latest Farm Income booklet released in December 2015 will make disturbing reading not only for farmers, but anyone who cares about our rural communities and the economy of Wales as a whole. Yet those figures relate to the 2014-15 financial year, and we know that the figures for this year will be far worse.

Such falls are insignificant compared with the devastation which would hit our communities were we to see the loss of our EU export markets, the further dilution or abandonment of the Common Agricultural Policy, and the liberalisation of trade – all proposals being put forward by some UK parties without any real assessment having been made of their likely impacts.

Alongside other important work and priorities outlined in this manifesto, undertaking such an assessment as soon as possible under the next Assembly will be essential if we are to ensure passive acceptance of possibly catastrophic changes is replaced with informed lobbying positions, and contingency plans for worst-case scenarios can be drawn up.

Foremost amongst such concerns is the possibility of our withdrawal from the EU, which the FUW remains wholeheartedly opposed to despite sharing many of the frustrations we all have regarding its imperfections.

The FUW is not affiliated to any political party, and therefore has a duty to work with both the government of the day and the opposition parties, irrespective of their political persuasions.

For the period of the next National Assembly and beyond the FUW is committed to lobbying all those in Cardiff to ensure that agriculture and family farms receive the attention and respect that they warrant – for the sake of all our futures.

Yours faithfully

Glyn Roberts

President

WALES WITHIN EUROPE

The most recent analysis of our rural and urban areas reveals that almost 35 percent of Wales' population live in rural areas - the highest proportion compared with all other regions in England and Wales.

The contribution of agriculture to the economy of our rural areas and Wales as a whole cannot be underestimated; Welsh Farm Business Survey figures show that, despite low profitability, a typical farm can annually contribute between £100,000 and £250,000 to the wider economy.

Yet such direct contributions are just the tip of the iceberg; our food and drinks industry is worth £5.2 billion to the Welsh economy, and agriculture has been identified as the most significant contributor to an estimated £1.9 billion in 'wildlife related activity' – while the contribution of generations of farming families to the unique landscape and culture so important to our tourism industry is clear to all.

Put simply, farming is the bedrock of our rural communities, without which vast direct and indirect contributions to Wales' economy as a whole would disappear.

The latest Farm Income figures, which relate to the 2014-15 financial year, give rise to major worries; yet a poor exchange rate and related factors such as the collapse in farmgate prices mean the figures for the 2015-2016 year will be lower again – falls which will have a significant knock-on effect on the wider Welsh economy.

These come despite the market protection measures and support provided through the EU, and according to a 2015 study by Agra Europe, the combined impact of EU import tariffs, the abolition of agricultural support through the CAP and market liberalisation which could accompany a 'Brexit' would result in 90 percent of UK farmers going out of business – with the impact for Welsh farmers far worse than in other regions.

The knock-on effect of this for our rural communities, and Wales' economy as a whole, cannot be underestimated, and the collapse in incomes which occurred during our partial exclusion from the common market during the 2001 Foot and Mouth disease crisis represents just a taste of what Brexit could mean for our rural communities.

Yet no detailed work has been undertaken to quantify such impacts in order to inform lobbying positions ahead of a vote on EU membership or contingency plans should such an exit become inevitable.

Moreover, given the pressures from some to water down the CAP and market protection measures even if we remain in the EU, such work is essential in terms of ensuring Assembly Members and the Welsh Government are well-informed and lobby at every level for what is best for Wales, rather than passively accepting policies which continental politicians of all political persuasions recognise as potentially disastrous for rural areas.

In order to address such concerns, the next Welsh Government should:

- Early during the next Assembly term instigate detailed further research into Wales' rural and wider economy, agriculture's place within it, and the primary, secondary and tertiary businesses which are reliant on agriculture
- Identify, qualitatively and quantitatively, the likely impacts of further reductions in CAP support, market liberalisation and the UK's exit from the EU on Wales' rural and wider economy, including in terms of the incomes and viability of farm businesses and the secondary and tertiary businesses which rely on them
- Proactively lobby at all levels for what is best for Wales in terms of EU membership and the future of the CAP
- Draw up contingency plans in order to negate the adverse impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU



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Milk & Dairy Produce Committee Chairman:
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Animal Health and Welfare Committee Chairman:
Catherine Nakielni

Younger Voice for Farming Committee Chairman:
Darren Williams

Arable, Horticulture and Cropping Committee Chairman:
John Savins



BETTER REGULATION

As many farm incomes have fallen to their lowest levels for over a decade, other businesses are still struggling to recover from the financial crisis, and public bodies – most notably local authorities – continue to slash services as a result of vast cuts to their budgets.

The causes of such pressures are often outside the control of the Welsh Government, including many of those which result from increase bureaucracy through EU regulations.

However, many of the rules and regulations which add to costs fall directly within the control of the Welsh Government, while others are UK or EU regulations subject to Welsh interpretation.

This has allowed some welcome moves to be made in terms of reducing red tape, for example with regard to implementing elements of the 2012 Working Smarter report; however, numerous rules, restrictions and policies remain in place which could be overhauled in order to benefit our economy.

Far from taking a proactive approach to such opportunities, elements of Bills, Acts and Orders passed or proposed over recent years seem, despite best intentions, more likely to add significantly to costs and restrictions for public bodies, businesses and individuals, and in the worst cases provide extra layers of bureaucracy which will prevent actions which would otherwise bring economic, social and even environmental benefits to our communities.

The Farmers' Union of Wales calls on the incoming Welsh Government to:

- Review the financial and practical implications of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and all related legislation, and make necessary changes in order to negate restrictions and costs for individuals, businesses and public bodies inherent to the current legislation
- Ensure prosperity and economic national indicators for rural areas and sectors are prioritised in terms of the Well-being of Future Generations Act
- Commit to ensuring area statements established under an Environment Act are properly evidenced, proportionate and do not add to economic pressures by adding costs and restrictions for public bodies, businesses and individuals
- Ensure those involved in policy development and the drafting of legislation understand and take account of the needs of rural businesses and make economic considerations a key priority
- Avoid the gold plating of European legislation under all circumstances
- Ensure all new and existing legislation is subject to a 'competitive disadvantage' test to ensure Welsh businesses are not burdened by regulations or restrictions not present for those against whom we compete within EU and global markets
- Proactively lobby Europe for reductions in unnecessary bureaucracy
- Review progress in terms of the 2012 Working Smarter recommendations
- Instigate a new Working Smarter review the scope of which extends to all areas affecting rural businesses and land use
- Continue to increase communication between all levels of government in order to share information and reduce the number of inspections for farm businesses
- Ensure that working partnerships and collaborative working between Government and its Agencies is prioritised to reduce bureaucracy and to encourage positive engagement with the industry

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- Make the reduction of costs, bureaucracy and red tape a priority in terms of all future legislation
- Implement at the earliest opportunity CAP simplification measures introduced by the European Commission while continuing to lobby for further improvements which ensure rules are proportionate and minimise bureaucracy for farmers and Welsh Government alike
- Ensure that indicative maps are recognised as such, and not regarded as definitive either under legislation or in terms of policies, and that fair avenues of appeal are available for all designations

FARMGATE PRICES AND LOCAL PROCUREMENT

Whilst many key factors affecting farmgate prices – most notably the EU-Sterling exchange rate and global supply and demand – are beyond the control of the Welsh Government, others are not, and the FUW believes that all government departments and public bodies have a duty to support government priorities in terms of boosting Wales' farming and food industry.

Such support can come in many forms, be it through regular meetings between ministers and retailers in order to bolster support for Welsh produce and equitable prices, financial support for initiatives which boost farmgate prices, or the procurement of Welsh produce by publicly funded authorities.

Whilst the proportion of local produce procured by some public bodies has increased over recent years, there remain significant numbers of administrations which fail to support Welsh agriculture, choosing instead to accept produce from countries which often fail to meet the high production standards which are a requirement in Wales.

Moreover, the nature of some procurement contracts means that what appears to be a commitment to procuring Welsh and British produce within procurement rules can be circumvented by carefully worded clauses.

The FUW believes the next Welsh Government should:

- Meet regularly with retailers and processors in order to encourage transparency and fairness within the food chain, and equitable practices and farmgate prices which support Wales' farmers and economy
- Recognise that local procurement represents an investment in Welsh businesses and raises the profile of Welsh produce in the eyes of consumers
- Proactively encourage and facilitate public and private sector procurement of Welsh produce in a manner that supports small, medium and large processors and cooperatives
- Instigate procurement policies which encourage the creation of new companies and cooperatives, in order to bring benefits in terms of local employment and redressing imbalances that currently exist throughout the supply chain
- Do so in a way which raises awareness of and confidence in Welsh produce, both amongst Welsh residents and visitors to Wales
- Allow consumers to make honestly informed opinions regarding the provenance of the food they buy by supporting moves to make clear country of origin food labelling a legal requirement

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- Ensure all Government Departments are aware of the 'Towards Sustainable Growth' action plan for the food and drink Industry and lead by example in terms of local procurement

BROADBAND AND ONLINE SERVICES

The range of services and opportunities which are exclusively available through the internet has grown significantly over the past decade, and access to broadband is now regarded as a necessity by the majority of UK businesses and households.

The FUW is fully supportive of moves which encourage the use of online services where they are available and practical in order to reduce administrative burdens and minimise the risk of errors, and has demonstrated this in terms of our support for RPW Online and the instrumental role we have played in increasing the proportion of online SAF submissions to 72 percent.

However, with access to broadband still well below the national average in many of our rural areas, and farm businesses representing the highest proportion of those with no broadband access, it is essential that the limitations of online services and communications are recognised, and that rural access to broadband is increased.

Moreover, given the rate at which the rules relating to agriculture change, and the penalties associated with breaching those rules, it is essential that such changes are communicated to the industry in an accessible format.

We therefore believe the incoming Government must:

- Accept the Welsh Public Accounts Committee's November 2015 recommendations on next generation broadband, with a particular emphasis on those rural areas which currently have no broadband access
- Recognise the limited extent of broadband access in many of Wales' rural communities and ensure no business is placed at a disadvantage as a result of the move to online services
- Ensure paper alternatives to online services are made available where necessary
- Continue to notify farmers of important information directly relating to their businesses by post
- Ensure important messages such as changes to regulations continue to be communicated by hard copy, in the form of Gwlad

COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY – POST 2020

Over the past five years both the European Commission and the Welsh Government have, it is hoped, learned important lessons in terms of planning for the future.

The European Commission (EC) failed to secure agreement for its proposed reforms in time to implement the scheme in 2014, as should have been the case, while the complexity of the regulations finally passed meant the new Commissioner – Phil Hogan – had little choice but to make CAP simplification an immediate priority.

Despite the twelve month delay to the CAP implementation date, the Welsh Government's failure to heed the FUW's warnings by preparing for the new CAP early on led to two legal challenges and limited options in terms of the final payment models which could be practically implemented in Wales.

As such, we are left with an imperfect Welsh Basic Payment Scheme which fails to meet the key aspirations agreed by government and industry, and costly levels of bureaucracy which contradict the original principles agreed by the European Commission and Parliament.

The clear lesson for the EC is that, in light of co-decision making, it is essential that discussions on the priorities and options available under the next CAP must be started early – a concern already raised by the FUW with Commissioner Hogan.

Meanwhile, the Welsh Government must also look beyond the current CAP and undertake work early on to identify those priorities and options which best suit Wales' agricultural industry in order to feed into discussions at an EU level and help shape the next CAP – moreover, concerns over whether the UK will remain a part of the EU should not be used to justify procrastination, not least since such work may also inform policies should exit from the EU become inevitable.

The incoming Welsh Government should therefore:

- Undertake detailed work to examine the possible outcomes of adopting a broad range of Welsh basic payment models post 2020
- Undertake mapping work in order to identify those areas which might be used as the basis for future payment models
- Investigate the benefits or otherwise of multi-tiered payment systems akin to the Redistributive and Tir Mynydd models in order to feed in to discussions at an EU level

RENEWABLE ENERGY

For hundreds of years Wales' mining, arable and woollen industries relied on renewable energy in the form of water and wind power, and by the end of the industrial revolution in the mid-19th Century no hamlet, however small, was complete without some form of mill.

The revolution in renewable energy, brought about by recognition of the need to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, has resulted in the development of new commercially viable sources of renewable energy, such as solar panels, as well as improvements in the efficiency of wind and water power.

Despite Wales' being perfectly suited for some forms of renewable energy generation, the percentage of electricity generated in Wales from renewable stands at just 10 percent – 5 percent lower than the UK average, and the lowest of all the UK devolved regions.

Whilst the FUW remains neutral in terms of the divisive issue of large-scale windfarms, we fully support the development of appropriate on-farm renewable energy sources, and believe Wales has only scratched the surface in terms of the contribution Welsh farms can make to green energy production.

The decision in 2015 by the UK Government's Department for Energy and Climate Change, which has responsibility for major national energy projects, to suddenly and drastically reduce support for renewables not only compromises our ability to help mitigate climate change, but has also led directly to farmers and others losing significant sums already invested in unfinished projects.

Whilst such decisions lie outside the control of the Welsh Government, many of the administrative obstacles which have slowed down or prevented the establishment of on-farm renewables do not.

The FUW calls on the next Welsh Government to:

- Carefully consider the outcome of the Welsh Assembly's Environment and Sustainability Committee's Smarter Energy Future for Wales inquiry
- Seek alternative and innovative ways in which funding can be provided in order to develop on-farm energy production
- Identify those barriers to on-farm energy production which fall within the remit of Welsh Government and seek to reduce bureaucratic burdens which prevent or add to the financial and time burdens which prevent developments
- Work with Ofgem and the UK Government to ensure the costs of connection to the National Grid by electricity companies are fair and proportionate
- Encourage and facilitate the use of wood and other carbon-neutral sources of energy while ensuring food production is not compromised

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In direct contradiction to the views of the FUW and the policies implemented by every other region of the EU, the Welsh Government chose in 2013 to annually reduce farm payments by 15% in order to fund what was described as an ambitious Rural Development Programme (RDP) – a decision which continues to have a severe impact on farm incomes.

For upland farmers, whose incomes are the lowest within the UK, such cuts have added to the damage done by the decision by the previous coalition Welsh Government to abandon Less Favoured Area payments; a decision which is almost unique within Europe and effectively replaced a simple and cheap to administer compensatory scheme with the hugely complex and costly Glastir agri-environment scheme, all at a time when the public funding available to administer such schemes was known to be falling.

As such, the FUW makes no apology for continuing to support the reintroduction of an LFA scheme (now referred to in regulations as an Area of Natural Constraint scheme), a principle supported by political parties of all persuasions across the EU, in order to recognise natural constraints and reduce the administrative burden and cost for all concerned, while ensuring Welsh farmers are not placed at a competitive disadvantage within our main markets.

Notwithstanding this, it is also notable that the introduction of the Glastir entry-level agri-environment scheme was heralded by the then Welsh Government as a replacement for Tir Mynydd to which all farmers throughout Wales would have access. As such, in the absence of the reintroduction of a compensatory scheme, all farmers should continue to have access to Glastir Entry.

Such schemes represent just one element of the Rural Development Programme, and the FUW has consistently argued for a significant proportion of the RDP budget to be allocated towards meaningful on-farm investments which meet overarching objectives for our key industries.

To this end, the FUW, NFU Cymru, CLA Cymru, YFC Wales, HCC, AHDB Llaeth and DDC have worked in partnership over the past year to develop the principles necessary to deliver a productive, profitable and progressive agricultural industry.

Central to this vision is large-scale support through the RDP for the concept of single overarching strategic initiatives which engage with individual businesses over appropriate timescales in order to address the key challenges faced both by those businesses and the main sectors within which they operate.

Critical to this is:

- Strategic projects which engage large enough numbers of farmers over sufficient timescales to secure changes to individual businesses and entire sectors
- A single database by which all key data critical to the development of individual farm businesses and entire sectors can be stored and analysed in order to identify progress and changing priorities over the course of the scheme for government and the industry
- The incentivisation of data provision in order to ensure sufficient engagement, recognition of key challenges and ongoing development
- A small grant scheme targeted at addressing key priorities, including those identified over time through the central database

Such projects can only be described as ambitious, but without such vision and sufficient funding Wales risk repeating some of the failings of previous RDPs, not least in terms of piecemeal stand-alone projects and databases which fail to deliver key priorities for sectors during the course of the RDP

Whilst knowledge transfer, innovation and advice for farmers are an important element of the RDP, we believe that these should complement the key strategic initiatives and objectives identified above, rather than being entities unto themselves

The FUW therefore calls on the future Welsh Government to:

- Re-examine the case for the provision of ANC payments in terms of the need to support disadvantaged farms and rural communities; thereby ensuring ANC payments in other regions of the EU do not place them at an unfair disadvantage; and minimising the administrative burden and cost associated with such schemes
- Ensure all farmers have access to practical agri-environment schemes which take account of historical farming practices and do not undermine the productivity of farms
- Roll out plans to introduce a part-farm scheme which is open to all farmers and involves minimum bureaucracy
- Ensure that large scale targeted schemes, such as those envisaged under the Nature Fund, do not compromise or undermine the principle of allowing access to agri-environment schemes by all farmers throughout Wales
- Support the principles agreed by the industry group in terms of delivering a productive, profitable and progressive agricultural industry through single overarching strategic initiatives
- Avoid at all costs strategic initiatives and other projects which would result in piecemeal stand-alone initiatives and databases
- Ensure that as much funding as possible is made available to invest directly in farm improvements and infrastructure which will improve farm returns and supply chain efficiency
- Ensure all knowledge transfer, innovation and advice services are worthwhile and likely to deliver benefits over and above delivery costs



TOURISM, DESIGNATED AREAS AND ACCESS

The importance of tourism to Wales' economy and the incomes of many farms which have diversified cannot be understated. However, such importance should not be allowed to eclipse the industries which are essential to those areas, not least agriculture, which has produced and continues to maintain those features which draw so many visitors to Wales.

While the large majority of such visitors are welcome and have full respect for the Countryside Code, others, through ignorance or sometimes maliciousness, cause problems which can compromise animal health and cost significant sums for farmers – the majority of whom, including within our designated areas, do not benefit from tourism income.

Moreover, improvements in transport networks have resulted in increasing numbers of day visitors making the most of access to the countryside without bringing any economic benefits whatsoever to local residents or authorities.

When those areas are designated, as is the case for National Parks, residents are subject to significant additional restrictions and costs not present in neighbouring areas which cannot be recouped, either from park authorities or through income from visitors to those areas.

A recent Welsh Government consultation paper suggested drastic increases in rights of access in Wales in order to improve health and wellbeing. Yet the paper conceded that, despite a three-fold increase in the area of land accessible by right to the public since 1998, the creation and extension of National Trails, and the opening of 4,700 miles of rights of way under improvement plans, the proportion of Welsh residents frequently undertaking outdoor recreation had not altered to any extent.

Such data demonstrate why the focus should be on encouraging responsible use of existing access in order to improve the health and wellbeing of all Welsh residents, rather than yielding to the views of a small minority who would see increases in access which compromise the rights of others, undermine economic activities and severely exacerbate current problems caused by irresponsible access.

By comparison, a number of the recommendations made in the final report of the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales are positive. However, others risk increasing costs and burdens for businesses and residents within such areas, while the key issue of ensuring revenue is generated which can be used to compensate those who are disadvantaged by increased restrictions and costs is largely ignored.

The FUW believes that the next Welsh Government should:

- Encourage appropriate growth in tourism which benefits rural areas and bolsters links with and benefits for local food producers
- Take responsibility for redoubling efforts to ensure that all those visiting the countryside obey the Countryside Code
- Focus on ensuring responsible use of existing access by all sections of Welsh society in order to improve the nation's health and wellbeing, while opposing moves to exacerbate existing problems by increasing access rights to land and waterways
- Work to ensure that residents and businesses within designated areas are not subject to restrictions and costs not present outside those areas, either by removing such inequalities or compensating those affected by them

- Introduce ways by which greater revenue can be generated from those visiting designated areas, particularly day visitors, in order to benefit residents, businesses and authorities

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH

The announcement in November 2015 of further cuts to central UK funding for activities undertaken by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) represent a major concern in terms of our ability to detect and tackle animal and plant health issues – not least given the devastating impacts animal diseases have had on Welsh agriculture over the past two decades.

The complex relationship between the devolution of animal health powers to Wales and the need to protect the UK in a concerted manner means that the impact of such cuts for Wales are difficult to assess – but, if nothing else, this highlights the need for clarity in terms of the boundaries between devolved and national issues and the funding allocations associated with devolved issues.

During recent years, a number of industry groups established under the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Steering Group to look at specific diseases have provided a template for future working – while also highlighting some of the obstacles which can be encountered due to the complex balance between disease control and economics.

A significant challenge faced by industry and government, including in terms of finding common ground with regard to key issues, has been the implementation of changes relating to holdings and animal movements – particularly in terms of quarantine units which both minimise the risk of disease transmission and enables commercial movements to take place.

With all sheep movements due to be recorded on the Welsh Government's EIDCymru database from 2016, the prospect of such a change raises significant concerns within the industry, and many remain confused as to what they will be expected to do, particularly if accessing the online system is not an option.

Notwithstanding such concerns, by design, EIDCymru is capable of being far more than a sheep movement database, and already has features which would allow it to become an important tool for the eradication of BVD.

As such, and as a database which is effectively owned by both the Welsh Government and industry (though HCC), it is believed that EIDCymru is the only acceptable candidate in terms of a central database by which all key data critical to the development of Welsh agriculture – including animal health data – should be stored and analysed as part of RDP funded strategic initiatives.

The FUW calls on the next Welsh Government to

- Do all it can to minimise the adverse impacts of cuts to APHA funding, whilst seeking to maintain levels of service for farmers, including through the Wales Veterinary Science Centre in Aberystwyth and a centre of livestock expertise in Carmarthen
- Strike an appropriate balance between changes to movement rules and the rationalisation of the County-Parish-Holding (CPH) system and the economic needs of the industry, particularly in terms of the use of practical quarantine units for all species
- Ensure that the new Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group engages and consults with farming organisations and that the benefits of stakeholder/government disease-specific task and finish groups continue to be investigated

- Provide clear and comprehensive guidance and support in relation to the rollout of EIDCymru and other changes relating to animal movements and holdings, while monitoring such changes in order to negate problems and minimise the risk of unfair penalties
- Make EIDCymru a central database by which all key data critical to the development of Welsh agriculture – including animal health – is collated

BOVINE TB

It is a sad reflection of the ongoing problems caused by bovine TB (bTB) that the disease warrants its own section in the FUW's Manifesto, and while extremely encouraging improvements have been seen since 2009, the latest statistics show a worrying increase in the proportion of animals testing positive for bTB, while the number of animals slaughtered in Wales in the first month of 2015 due to TB is close to the number slaughtered in the whole of the UK three decades ago.

Whilst the FUW is generally supportive of blanket measures such as annual and pre-movement bTB testing, considerable concern exists regarding the proportionality of some measures and the severe economic restrictions they place on farms – in particular as a result of the European Commission's refusal to allow proportionate judgements to be made by state veterinarians following outbreaks.

Moreover, there can be no doubt that, had the current Welsh Government heeded the advice of its own experts in terms of addressing the disease reservoir which exists in badgers, levels of bTB would be lower than they currently are.

The decision in 2012 to replace plans to cull badgers in the IAA with a vaccination programme was branded by the FUW as a betrayal of Welsh farmers and taxpayers, particularly as the Welsh Government's own financial assessment concluded that culling would, by saving the lives of cattle, result in a net financial benefit, while vaccination would lead to a net loss of £3.5 million.

The Welsh Government's U-turn on badger culling led the Bovine Tuberculosis Subgroup of the EU Task Force for Monitoring Animal Disease Eradication to conclude that *"The Welsh eradication plan will lose some impetus as badger culling will now be replaced with badger vaccination... There is no scientific evidence to demonstrate that badger vaccination will reduce the incidence of TB in cattle. However there is considerable evidence to support the removal of badgers in order to improve the TB status of both badgers and cattle."*

With the Republic of Ireland attributing its success in halving bTB incidents to proactive badger culling, and routine badger culling in countries such as France and Germany maintaining bTB incidence levels close to zero, the Union remains resolute in its belief that Wales must return to a science led approach to controlling bTB in badgers.

Whilst minimising disease transmission between badgers and cattle is often impossible, particularly in extensive systems, the FUW has long argued for those neighbouring bTB outbreak farms to be informed of the location of outbreaks in order to allow them to take steps to minimise contact with animals which may present a disease risk.

Whilst such moves continue to be rejected by Government on the grounds of data protection, in January 2016 the current Welsh Government intends to publish details of the geographical locations of all Welsh incidences on a publicly available interactive web-based map.

Such a move has already been shown in England to be open to abuse by animal rights campaigners, and, given the high proportion of Welsh farmers who do not have access to the internet, and the possibility that such information may not represent the precise location of outbreaks, the FUW believes that making such information available to the public while continuing to fail to inform neighbours is inappropriate.

The FUW calls on the incoming Welsh Government to:

- Properly balance the economic needs of farm businesses against the need to minimise disease transmission
- Ensure that proportionate penalties are only applied where they are appropriate, and that the practicalities of farming in the real world are taken into full account when considering appeals against penalties and sanctions
- Introduce an exemption from the requirement to pre-movement test for 60 days after a clear test for movements from high risk parishes or regions, and 180 days after a clear test for movements from low risk parishes or regions
- Urge England to bring its rules in relation to animal testing in line with those present in Wales
- Implement a badger culling policy at the earliest opportunity, in line with official ministerial advice previously received by the current Welsh Government, in order to replicate the positive outcomes seen in countries throughout the world
- Ensure those neighbouring bTB outbreaks are informed of the location of those outbreaks, and that information relating to the geographical location of holdings suffering outbreaks is not made available to the general public

