



HOUSE OF COMMONS · LONDON · SW1A 0AA

11 March 2021

Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Sent by email to Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@gov.wales

Dear First Minister

We are writing to you on behalf of the Welsh farming community to voice our serious concerns at the outcome of the recent Senedd vote on annulling The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021. You and 29 other Members voted against annulment.

Members of both the FUW and NFU Cymru have written to us to say that, in classifying the whole of Wales as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone, the Welsh Government has put their livelihoods at risk. The huge upfront investment required to comply with the regulations will make their businesses unviable and uncompetitive, causing massive damage to the sector.

In fact, we are aware that the Regulations are already having a detrimental impact on the mental health of many in agriculture. Undoubtedly, this should come as no surprise to you when considering the warning that this might happen in your own Explanatory Memorandum. However, what is alarming is that your Welsh Government have pursued the NVZ regardless of the concerns raised about farmers' health and wellbeing.

Alongside agriculture, there could also be a potentially negative impact on the environment. Suckler cow herds have been declining in Wales. These herds provide a very important contribution to biodiversity, managing some of our most important habitats. Some farmers are already warning us that they are now looking to give up keeping cattle. It transpires therefore that regulations intending to benefit the environment, could lead to a negative impact on biodiversity due to the loss of suckler cow herds. Additionally, you may be aware that NRW has warned that the proposed new rules will have the perverse outcome of making water quality worse, which is an unacceptable situation in the fight against pollution.

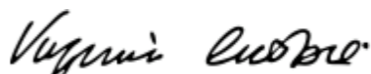
In claiming that the voluntary approach has failed, the Welsh Government has misled Wales. In fact, it transpires that the Welsh Government did not give the voluntary approach a real chance:

- The Blue Flag Farming approach was not backed by Welsh Government when farmers applied for funding through the RDP Sustainable Management Scheme;
- Despite project results and Water Standard being shared in letters with you in March 2020, including recommendations for next steps, and a response being issued by officials stating that detailed consideration would be given to the Water Standard, NFU Cymru have received no further reply;

- And despite industry organisations committing to the Wales Land Management Forum Sub-Group on agricultural pollution, and the group submitting a progress report to the Minister with 45 recommendations in April 2018, as of last month the Welsh Government had not responded or met the expert group.

We are asking you to recognise the serious plight of our Welsh farmers, reconsider these regulations, and give the voluntary approach a real chance.

Yours Sincerely



VIRGINIA CROSBIE MP - YNYS MÔN



JANET FINCH-SAUNDERS MS - ABERCONWY

SARAH ATHERTON MP - WREXHAM
SIMON BAYNES MP - CLWYD SOUTH
ANGELA BURNS MS - CARMARTHEN WEST AND SOUTH
PEMBROKESHIRE
RT HON ALUN CAIRNS MP - VALE OF GLAMORGAN
RT HON STEPHEN CRABB MP - PRESELI PEMBROKESHIRE
ANDREW RT DAVIES MS - SOUTH WALES CENTRAL
PAUL DAVIES MS - PRESELI PEMBROKESHIRE
SUZY DAVIES MS - SOUTH WALES WEST
RUSSELL GEORGE MS - MONTGOMERYSHIRE

MARK ISHERWOOD MS - NORTH WALES
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FAY JONES MP - BRECON AND RADNORSHIRE
LAURA ANNE JONES MS - SOUTH WALES EAST
DAVID MELDING MS - SOUTH WALES CENTRAL
DARREN MILLAR MS - CLWYD WEST
ROB ROBERTS MP - DELYN
DR JAMIE WALLIS MP - BRIDGEND
CRAIG WILLIAMS MP - MONTGOMERYSHIRE