

CLA Wales paper of written evidence for the Environment and Sustainability Committee in advance of the oral evidence session on Glastir on 17 May 2012

In reply to the Committee's questions:-

Q: The progress made by the Welsh Government to implement the recommendations made by the Rees Roberts review

CLA Wales welcomed the changes made following the Rees Roberts review, but we think that they did not go far enough in addressing many of the issues identified by the group. We would like the Welsh Government to revisit the minutes of the meetings to further discuss suggestions made by the group which were not adopted.

For example:

1. There is a strong feeling from members that diary keeping requirements are too onerous. They accept that a diary is required for land under management within the scheme but they do not accept that a diary needs to be kept for all land.
2. Farmers would like more than two years to complete capital works.

Q: The greatest barriers to the scheme are:-

- Market buoyancy means that the small payment offered per hectare under Glastir is not so appealing.
- The bad press surrounding Glastir puts people off.
- The requirement for the creation of habitats rather than the maintenance of existing ones. Farmers are discovering that by having already completed work to improve field boundaries, they would have to create more habitat in order to get enough points to get into the scheme. Many are looking for support in maintaining their most valuable habitats rather than utilising improved land in the creation of new habitat. CLA Wales believes that we should be working to maintain and improve our existing habitat, rather than converting improved or even semi-improved land away from food production. We are also concerned that any farmer who does convert improved land to habitat creation will result in a loss of capital value for that asset, as it is unlikely that it could be converted back to intensive grassland if habitat has been created on it. The CLA accepts that payments can only be made on the basis of compensation for profit foregone plus costs, but we do believe that a more creative approach can be made when creating management options.
- Misunderstanding of payment rates with an assumption that they are being paid less than they would for any activity under Tir Gofal.
- The assumption that it is difficult to complete the application form.
- The scheme is very complicated, especially considering that it is supposed to be an entry level scheme. For example, the regional options had very little uptake and are very difficult for potential applicants to grasp.

Q: Funding arrangements, including:

Flexibility between the funding of different elements of the scheme

ACRES has been a good driver for the scheme. Many farmers are entering Glastir All-Wales Element (AWE) in order to access ACRES.

Targeted Element ("TE") could be a good driver for the scheme, however, as farmers have no idea about the probability of gaining entry to the TE. They also have no clear indication of what may be required or what they are likely to be paid. There is also a great time lapse between expressing an interest in Glastir until TE can be taken up. We would recommend that the TE scheme could be made available to all farmers within the targeted areas, not just the ones who have already entered into the AWE. This would then attract farmers into Glastir AWE.

Forestry CLA Wales has great concerns that the woodland element of Glastir is heading in the same direction as the originally launched Glastir AWE. The stakeholder group membership includes knowledgeable practitioners and stakeholder organisations that are all keen to ensure Glastir is successful and fit for purpose. CLA Wales is urging the Welsh Government to take on board advice from the stakeholder group in the development of the scheme.

It is imperative that there is flexibility to move funds between different elements of Glastir to ensure that the budget is spent in each year. CLA Wales expects the number of applications to enter the scheme on 1 January 2013 to be limited. Land managers already engaged in agri-environment schemes will not be entering the scheme until 1 January 2014 after their existing schemes have come to an end.

Funding available for farmers in less favoured areas ("LFA's")

In looking at payments to LFA's under Glastir, CLA Wales believes that we should consider the larger picture *post* CAP review. We believe that it is imperative that payments to all farmers in Wales should be equitable. There are fears that there could be a great increase in Single Farm Payments to LFA areas as a result of the CAP review. Therefore, payments under Glastir need to take into account the levels of payments made to LFA's *post* CAP review. We also accept that there are limitations to payment rates for Glastir due to the World Trade Organisation parameters of payments being made for compensation for profit foregone plus costs. However, we believe that a more creative approach can be taken to ensure that an appropriate rate is paid.

Contact:

Sue Evans, Director of Policy, CLA Wales
01547 317085
sue.evans@cla.org.uk