

Annex C

Ministerial Roundtable – Terms of Reference

Purpose of Roundtable:

The Welsh Government intends to continue to work with key stakeholders to finalise details of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) following the conclusion of the *Keeping farmers farming* consultation, the delivery of the final Scheme, and longer term to embed the final Scheme.

The input from this Roundtable will be used to help shape the final SFS as an advisory, but not decision-making body.

The purpose of the Roundtable will include, but is not limited to;

- Ensuring views reflect and contribute to delivery of the Sustainable Land Management objectives from the Agriculture (Wales) Act;
 - Sustainable Production of Food and other Goods
 - Mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - Maintain and enhance the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits they provide
 - Conserve and enhance the countryside and cultural resources and promote public access to and engagement with them, and to sustain the Welsh language and promote and facilitate its use
- Reviewing and confirming the priorities and framework for the SFS – ie Universal, Optional and Collaborative Layers. The initial focus of this Roundtable will be Universal Actions plus priority Optional and Collaborative Actions.
- To reflect on and provide input to key SFS questions helping to shape an agreeable Scheme, including;
 - Eligibility, Actions, scheme rules etc
 - Payment methodology
 - Advice and support mechanisms
- Consideration of the evidence and analysis base for the final investment decision.
- Consider the possible impact of other relevant policy areas on the Scheme.
- Share views on the budget requirements for the Scheme, recognising that the budget setting process is independent of this group.
- Consider how the collective expertise could be coordinated to help the industry transition to the final SFS.
- Other related issues as considered relevant and agreed by the Chair.

The Roundtable's remit includes the scope of the SFS expectations set out in the Ministerial Written Statement of 27 February 2024, namely:

- Establish regular review points between the Welsh Government and the farming unions and representatives, in formulating final proposals.

- Considering an evidence-based review of any further and alternative proposals to achieve carbon sequestration within the Sustainable Farming Scheme.
- Ensuring actions within SFS are appropriately targeted at improving the economic resilience of farms. This includes ensuring woodland and habitat requirements do not make farms unviable.
- Ensuring that where farmers are asked to gather information as part of SFS, this process will be as efficient as possible, GDPR compliant and maximises the value of that data to farmers.
- Ensuring farm payments are distributed fairly and accessible to all.
- Carry out an updated economic analysis.

Input from the Roundtable will help inform details and options to be provided to Welsh Ministers who retain responsibility for decisions on design and implementation of the final scheme.

Structure

For strategic discussion the Roundtable will be chaired by the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs (DFMCSCCRA), or by exception delegated to appropriate senior Welsh Government officials. Roundtable briefing sessions will be chaired by senior Welsh Government officials.

The secretariat will be provided by Rural Affairs Directorate.

The frequency of meetings will be determined by the timescales and issues considered but is expected to be regular to reflect the importance and urgency of the discussions.

The membership of the Roundtable, at a senior level, is set out below. Other stakeholders may be added at the discretion of the DFMCSCCRA.

To maintain continuity of discussions and organisational viewpoint we ask the pre-agreed invitees to attend all meetings if possible. Alternative delegates can attend by exception if main invitee is unavailable. We intend to schedule meetings far enough in advance to enable your participation.

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)
Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group (AHWFG)
British Meat Processors Association (BMPA)
British Veterinary Association (BVA) Cymru
Coed Cadw*
Country Land and Business Association (CLA Cymru)
Confederation of Forest Industries (Confor)
Confederation of Young Farmers Clubs (YFC)
DPJ Foundation
Farmers Union of Wales (FUW)
Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC)
Independent farmer representative

National Farmers Union Cymru (NFU Cymru)
Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN)
Soil Association Cymru*
Tenant Farmers Association (TFA)
Wales Food & Drink Industry Board
Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers (WLBP).
Wildlife Trusts Wales (WTW)*
World Wide Fund for Nature*
Officials – Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.

**Representatives of the wider Wales Environment Link (WEL) partnership. Only three of the four partners (WWF being the substitute organisation) will attend Roundtable at any one time.*

Ways of working

Meetings will be held in-person (and hybrid) where possible, or via Microsoft Teams. We will not be able to pay your travel or other associated costs for attending meetings in person.

Meeting notes and actions will be managed by the secretariat, who will endeavour to share meeting papers as far in advance as possible, or at least one week prior to each meeting and share resulting minutes / notes within one week of each meeting.

By agreeing to take part in this Roundtable, stakeholder representatives are committing to not publish sensitive information or share wider than is necessary or agreed by the wider Roundtable.

The outputs from this Roundtable will contribute to, and be referenced within the final Scheme Details documents and any interim statements made by Welsh Ministers. A published Roundtable output report is not anticipated. The Roundtable members may choose to provide public updates if agreed by the wider Roundtable and Welsh Government in advance.

Process

The Officials Group will consider the technical detail of each Scheme Action, the Scheme Requirements, overall ambition and impact as well as the relationship between each of these elements. The Roundtable will consider the outputs of the Officials Group to provide views to the DFMCS SCCRA.

For the phase of work between the Keeping farmers farming consultation and producing an updated Scheme Outline, the process for each element to be explored by the Roundtable was:

1. Welsh Government present the;
 - specific proposal detailed in the Keeping farmers farming consultation,
 - the consultation feedback, and

- suggested changes, or to make the case to retain existing proposal.

2. Roundtable members to provide feedback and alternative propositions (if appropriate).
3. Depending on Roundtable feedback;
 - a. the updated (or retained) proposal will be part of recommendation to Welsh Ministers as part of the final Scheme.
 - b. Where required the Roundtable can explore suggestions for a different approach.
 - c. Where required the issue can be cascaded to other Welsh Government stakeholder groups, primarily the existing SFS Officials' Working Group to explore alternative approaches.
 - d. Carbon Sequestration actions will automatically be delegated for consideration by the Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel.

From February 2025 to the publication of the final Scheme, an alternative two-stage pattern is introduced to maintain focus on strategic issues, as well as ensuring transparency with the technical detail. This two-stage pattern includes;

4. Briefing Sessions delivered by Welsh Government officials, so Roundtable members have the opportunity to be informed on the technical detail being presented to, and discussed with the Officials Group and other stakeholder groups where appropriate. This will include a summary of significantly complex or contentious issues, including a readout of their discussion at the Officials Group, to help focus Roundtable considerations.
5. Strategic discussions of the full Group chaired by the DFMCCSRA to cover such issues as the payment methodology and Business Case.

Relationship with other stakeholder groups

The SFS Officials Group and Carbon Sequestration Evidence Review Panel are subgroups of, and will report to this Roundtable. Specific tasks may be delegated / allocated to other groups to consider.

The Roundtable will run in parallel with other Welsh Government stakeholder groups such as the Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group, the RPW User Working Group and the Trees and Hedges Stakeholder Delivery Group. These are not subgroups of the Roundtable, but may feed into the Roundtable where appropriate.