# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **16 September 2024 Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** |
| **DATE** | **03 October 2024** |
| **BY** | **Huw Irranca-Davies, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs** |

In accordance with the inter-institutional relations agreement, I can report to Members I attended the latest meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 16 September 2024.

The meeting was chaired by Steve Reed MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and was also attended by Mary Creagh MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Nature), Baroness Hayman, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, and Andrew Muir MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The Group agreed to establish stronger intergovernmental relations based on the principles of honesty, trust and respect. To implement this the group discussed and agreed new and ambitious Terms of Reference to guide ways of working and decision-making at ministerial and official levels. These will be published on the UK Government website and I will provide you with a link to these in due course. I emphasised the importance of meaningful engagement and sharing learning with each other. I also highlighted that the Common Frameworks are an essential part of working together effectively.

We discussed a future joint work programme for enhanced collaboration, and we agreed that our efforts should focus on improving our food security, enhancing our biosecurity, improving our circular economy, protecting nature and increasing the UK's biodiversity, including the use of nature market frameworks where appropriate. I welcomed the opportunity to collaborate in these areas, which will enable us to ensure better outcomes for our environment and food security.

We agreed that communities and businesses across the UK were vital to the economy and are the users and protectors of our shared natural resources. In the context of natural capital, I highlighted that sustainable management of our natural resources is the basis of our approach in Wales.

The Group discussed the importance of transparency and collaborative working on any UK discussions with the EU regarding a possible Sanitary/Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement

Regarding waste management and a circular economy. I highlighted Wales’ position as the second-best recycling nation in the world, and offered to share lessons learned with other nations.

We agreed that joint scientific research was a clear area where the four nations must work together. I pointed out that collaboration on research could ease strains on resources and share local expertise. One area I highlighted for future discussion was collaboration on both research and on the ground implementation of bovine TB eradication strategies.

The UK Agriculture Market Monitoring (UKAMMG) Group then provided use with an update on its work. The UKAMMG comprises officials from each of the four governments and analyses of issues affecting agriculture markets across the UK. I highlighted the importance of the agriculture budget to continued delivery of a range of important objectives by the sector.

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee gave an update outlining the critical role nature plays in supporting healthy societies, resilient economies and thriving businesses. All four governments agreed there is a shared ambition of rebalancing the demand placed on the goods and services provided by the natural world and to protect its capacity to supply them.

Finally, we agreed a schedule of meetings for 2024 and 2025 to facilitate engagement and oversee the areas of enhanced collaboration. The next meeting will take place 18 November.

A communique regarding this meeting will be published on the UK Government website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/communique-from-the-inter-ministerial-group-for-environment-food-and-rural-affairs>.