



Jenny Rathbone, MS
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
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17 November 2020

Dear Jenny,

Thank you for your contribution to the debate on 11 November regarding the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee 'Procurement in the Foundational Economy' report, and in particular your interest in local food networks.

I offered to write to you to provide an update on Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) pilots which are being supported through the Foundational Economy Challenge Fund.

CEA is a technology-based approach to food production within an enclosed growing structure, which aims to provide protection and maintain optimal growing conditions throughout the development of the crop.

Social Farms and Gardens have been awarded a grant of £418,000 to pilot CEA projects across three sites: Ty Pawb Community Hub, in Wrexham; Green Meadow Community Farm Cwmbran; and Welcome to our Woods in Treherbert.

These pilots will seek to establish whether CEA can be a truly sustainable system of food growing by trialling technology and systems to help reduce the otherwise heavy 'fossil fuel' inputs that can be required. Welsh based tech-businesses will design and help install the infrastructure.

The pilots allow for tailored CEA systems to fit different community settings, but allowing them to be investigated and assessed in a co-ordinated and joined up way across all three sites. This type of project is unique and has not been trialled in this way before. It will allow the testing of new, socially focused business models, the engagement of the local communities and businesses with CEA, and the development of new technical solutions.

By embedding these systems in the communities where these three pilots are located and using Foundational Economy principles, alternative options for food growing can be communicated to a broad and diverse audience. Equally, connecting people to their food systems can have positive health and wellbeing gains.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

All three schemes will innovate through testing new community-based engagement models looking at social well-being, local entrepreneurship and environmental impact.

The pilots are due to complete by the end of March, by which time it is hoped that a range of benefits will be delivered:

- fresh produce being grown in urban settings;
- allowing the communities to acquire skills and knowledge to benefit from the work involved in this project;
- realising potential to continue with the pilots well beyond this initial grant support;
- showcasing energy efficient options for CEA; and
- transferability of learning to other communities and locations across Wales.

Key stakeholders such as local hospitality outlets who can benefit from sourcing locally grown produce will be engaged by the pilots, as will local authorities who will see how CEA may help tackle local social, economic and environmental challenges.

These pilots are a great opportunity to showcase how supply chains within the Foundational Economy can be made more resilient and more closely connected to the wellbeing of the communities within which they are located.

Officials from across Welsh Government are supporting these pilots and their progress will be tracked carefully so that any successes can be communicated and made available for adoption in other parts of Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lee Waters AS/MS

Dirprwy Weinidog yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport