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Woodknowledge Wales Ltd / Ffarm Moelyci / Felin Hen Road / Tregarth / Gwynedd / LL57 4BB

30<sup>th</sup> October 2019

To whom it may concern,

*Re. Woodknowledge Wales response to the Welsh government consultation 'Sustainable Farming and our Land'*

Woodknowledge Wales champions the development of wood-based industries for increased prosperity and well-being in Wales. Woodknowledge Wales is an independent, for-public-good cross-sector membership alliance. Our membership consists of over 40 Welsh organisations and includes the complete timber construction supply chain from forest to home.

Firstly, we would like to make the general point that the document is not radical enough. It is an example of last century thinking. We are today experiencing an existential crisis where climate change is the biggest threat to our future generations. As a result, Welsh Government has declared a climate emergency. Woodknowledge Wales fears that the historic opportunity to re-think how we use the land as a key asset in tackling climate change is in danger of being lost. This means radically upscaling and increasing our Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) activities by directly intervening with forest planting and forest management on an unprecedented scale, working with partners to invest money now in a way that maximises CCUS. The consultation document does refer to decarbonisation and carbon capture but we argue that this needs to become a major priority particularly if we consider the history of deforestation in Wales. We need clear evidence-based carbon sequestration and storage planning to maximise CCUS across Wales (in trees, soil and the built environment) and we need an effective mechanism to deliver this. We need to bring the key stakeholders together across the supply chain and agree a radical plan of action. We need to work with landowners, but we must avoid delays caused by bureaucracy, application fatigue, administrative short-comings and lack of resources.

Secondly, Woodknowledge Wales fully supports the detailed consultation response provided by Confor.

Thirdly, we would like to add further comments in response to *Question 4: What are your views on providing support to the industry and supply chain?*

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**Priority A – promoting Sustainable Brand Values** – improving the promotional offer for farmers’ produce by effectively evidencing Sustainable Land Management.

If food security is important then so is resource security. Improving our balance of trade in all products and services is a foundational economic priority. Over the next 30 years the demand for all resources is forecast to treble. How are our future resource needs going to be met? Inefficient use of land is not sustainable or responsible and therefore policy and support mechanisms should encourage both efficient and sustainable land use options.

**Priority B – encouraging greater market alignment** – supporting farmers in understanding and producing what consumers and the supply chain want to buy.

We need to develop a new relationship between people and trees, between landowners, timber processors architects and engineers, in a way that meets the needs of this century. We are calling this transformation ‘Forest Nation’. This requires an integrated policy approach across all Welsh Government departments. Why, for example does timber sit in the environmental portfolio of Welsh Government and steel in the economy? This is another example of last century thinking

**Priority C – identifying and overcoming barriers in the supply chain** – supporting farmers to increase the amount and value of Welsh products used in the supply chain, both in Wales and beyond.

The subsidy regime of the CAP has left an appalling legacy of under investment in the timber supply chain, and in terms of forest industries has left Wales far behind continental best practice. For example, we manufacture no added-value engineered wood products in Wales. A radical investment plan is required that recognises the role that timber has to play in a sustainable economy – as the only industrial material available at scale whose greater use can also mitigate climate change.

**Priority D – promoting joined up support on knowledge transfer and innovation** – working with academia and the wider industry to identify and further the best agricultural research, innovation and technology, and make it easier to adopt on farm.

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There is a chronic lack of research and innovation in the forestry and timber sector in Wales. Timber has not been seen as shiny and new. Foundational economic policy holds out the possibility to re-focus policy interventions on the development of local timber supply chains and upon the institutions that influence these supply chains (that can restrict or support their development).

**Priority E – shortening supply chains for Welsh products – supporting the creation of local supply chains that can retain the value of products within Wales.**

Welsh Government is responsible for funding approximately 25% of the house building and for managing 50% of the forest. By bringing these sectors closer together Welsh Government would be de-risking both. We have demonstrated that timber from the Welsh forest is fit for purpose for high value applications in house building and the Welsh land and climate is ideal for growing construction grade softwoods. More details about how Woodknowledge Wales believes such supply chain integration can be delivered across housing, manufacturing and forest industries is contained in our report, [Zero Carbon Homes – Actions to Integrate our Welsh Forest Industries with Modern Methods of Construction](#)

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Newman".

Gary Newman  
CEO | Woodknowledge Wales

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Gary Newman  
Chief Executive

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