**Spring Conference 2021**

**Go Green, not Go Broke**

**Proposed by:** Montgomeryshire Liberal Democrats,
Ceredigion Liberal Democrats,
Brecon & Radnorshire Liberal Democrats

**Conference notes:**

1. Net farm income in Wales has been below the level of subsidy and 59% of Welsh farmers have made a loss in at least one of the last three years.
2. Wales produces food to some of the highest standards in the world for animal welfare, food quality and environmental protection.
3. There has been a dramatic loss of biodiversity in Wales over the last 70 years, due in part to agricultural practices encouraged and subsidised by successive governments.
4. 14% of total greenhouse gas emissions in Wales have been attributed to agriculture.
5. Pollution, flooding, and soil loss have all been unintended consequences of government policies over many decades.
6. Imported food currently accounts for 55% of the UK’s food consumption and 95% of vegetables in Wales.

**Welsh Liberal Democrat policies for food, farming and the environment should be based upon the following key objectives:**

1. Thriving rural communities where people can continue to earn their living from the land, using sustainable methods to produce affordable good quality, nutritious food.
2. Food security, recognising that sustainable food production is a public good to be encouraged.
3. Agricultural practices contributing less to greenhouse gas emissions, with the management of our land trapping more carbon than it emits.
4. A reversal of the decline in biodiversity resulting in a nature rich landscape that will reduce global warming, improve the quality of the local environment and boost tourism.
5. Peat bog restoration and an increase in primarily native, deciduous woodland cover to increase carbon sequestration and reduce flooding downstream.

**Conference calls on the Welsh government’s new sustainable payment framework for farming to:**

1. End the pressure on farmers to continually increase production and their reliance on imported protein which can lead to rainforest destruction elsewhere.
2. Encourage organic farming and discourage the use of agrochemicals that damage the environment.
3. Enable a transition to the sustainable grazing of livestock.
4. Allow for a moderate increase in sustainably managed grass-fed cattle, particularly where that would benefit biodiversity and soil retention.
5. Reward farming schemes that reduce carbon emissions and increase carbon retention.
6. Promote an increase in fruit and vegetable production to reduce reliance on imports.
7. Provide an education and training programme to equip farmers with the skills needed for sustainable farming and diversification.
8. Ensure that the introduction of the new scheme based on public money for public goods is phased in as quickly as possible but in a way that recognise that farmers cannot cope with a sudden disruption to their income, and over a period of not more than ten years.

**Conference believes that rural communities thrive where there is a synergy between food production, tourism, and other forms of rural land use. Conference therefore calls for:**

1. A relaxation of planning constraints on new rural homes where substantial net environmental gain can be demonstrated by the building project.
2. Better maintenance of and the provision of new rights of way, including cycle tracks and bridleways, based on proper obligations by and compensation to landowners.
3. Full high speed broadband coverage in rural areas to enable more people to work from home.
4. A scheme to help organise and finance succession and support for new entrants to the sector, and support, where they exist, county owned starter farms.

**Conference endorses the policy paper ‘Go Green not Go Broke’ and endorses the following key points for agriculture and land use in Wales.**

1. The Basic Payments scheme should be replaced by a system based on public money for public goods. This includes sustainable land management for biodiversity gain, to meet our climate change obligations and for improvements in water quality and pollution. Quality food production is also to be considered a public good.
2. The transition from the Basic Payments Scheme to the Sustainable Farming Scheme needs to be managed carefully and must ensure that no farmer is left without financial support during the process.
3. The UK Government should only enter into trade agreements under which imported goods meet the high environmental, food quality and animal welfare standards expected of home-produced food.