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NFU Cymru Response – Welsh Government Consultation – Structure for Welsh Apprenticeship Frameworks

NFU Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Welsh Government consultation on the structure for Welsh Apprenticeship Frameworks and supporting pathways.

NFU Cymru champions Welsh farming and represents farmers throughout Wales and across all sectors. Our vision is for a productive, profitable and progressive Welsh agricultural industry that delivers jobs, growth and investment for Wales.

The importance of the farming industry in rural Wales cannot be over-stated. Welsh farming businesses are the backbone of the Welsh rural economy, the axis around which rural communities turn. The raw ingredients that we produce are the cornerstone of the £6.8 billion Welsh food and drink supply chain, 217,000 are employed across the whole food and drink supply chain with 78,000 employed in the Food and Farming Priority Sector.

We are proud that the Welsh public associate Welsh farmers, first and foremost, with providing safe, high quality and traceable food and at NFU Cymru we want to ensure that consumers in Wales, the UK and further afield can continue to enjoy and choose the top quality food that we produce here in Wales.

Welsh farmers look after over 80% of the land area of Wales, maintaining and enhancing our natural environment – Wales' key asset. Farming activity supports a diverse range of species, habitats and ecosystems, provides a range of ecosystem services including flood alleviation, carbon sequestration, climate change mitigation; and delivers the significant backdrop for Wales' tourism and recreation sector worth an estimated £2.5bn annually. Welsh farmers are key promoters and protectors of our culture, heritage and the Welsh Language. Overall Welsh farming makes an unparalleled contribution to the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Welsh Agricultural Industry has the highest proportion of Welsh speakers, more than any other sector.

Overall Welsh farming makes an unparalleled contribution to the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of Wales in line with the Well-Being of Future Generations Act summarised in our Welsh Farming: Bringing Wales Together [booklet](#) and [video](#).

NFU Cymru recognises the need for and is keen to encourage young people to consider a career in agriculture, whether they are from a farming background or not. Apprenticeships provide a key pathway for young people to develop the skills they require for a successful career within the farming sector.

NFU Cymru notes Welsh Government proposals to implement a revised, simplified structure of 23 high level apprenticeship frameworks, supported by 72 occupational pathways. Each broad occupational sector and supporting pathway will be linked to a specific occupation, craft or trade which will strengthen the relevance, quality and rigour of the frameworks. We note that Agriculture and Environment is included as a sector with a number of occupational pathways in agriculture, land-based engineering, management and production and animal care and management.

NFU Cymru is supportive of the stronger occupational link proposed by Welsh Government which has potential to deliver new entrants to the farming industry. Reducing the number of apprenticeship frameworks from over 200 to a focus on 23 sectors would appear sensible.

NFU Cymru notes that the list of occupational pathways proposed covers the key areas of agriculture, land-based and environment under the agriculture/land based sector. We identify the list is quite limited so it could be that industry backed apprenticeships could be developed to fill any gaps. NFU Cymru is clear that the farming industry must have the opportunity to influence the content of the frameworks moving forward. We also highlight that future apprenticeships will need to have elements of learning that touch upon climate change, greenhouse gas and livestock systems, soils and water quality as well as animal and crop husbandry and business management. Where the removal of specific apprenticeships is concerned, industry engagement prior to removal will be necessary to ensure that industry and government are aligned in viewing anything to be removed as being redundant.

NFU Cymru notes the reference to STEM as a focus area. NFU Cymru strongly believes that agriculture/horticulture should be recognised as a STEM subject with technical industry occupations covered. Whilst NFU Cymru welcomes the occupational focus in proposals, we highlight that 'softer' skills including leadership and management as well as a technical focus of the occupational pathway will be necessary.

NFU Cymru is a member of the Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales and the Skills Development and Training Sub Committee. Through this group we have been actively pressing for agricultural apprenticeships to be better recognised and rewarded within the Agricultural Workers grading structure. As part of proposals we have submitted to modernise the Agricultural Wages Order we have sought to fully integrate the apprentice grades into a new modern fit for purpose wage structure. The proposals, which we continue to refine, set out a structure that will actively reward those who pursue agricultural apprenticeships by providing a fast track route to the new proposed grades of Agricultural Worker and Senior Agricultural Worker. We hope that the panel will accept our recommendations and take this forward as part of the modernisation programme. We believe that providing both a financial and career development incentive to individuals that undertake an apprenticeship can only be a positive.

Finally, NFU Cymru is keen to work with other organisations in improving the appeal of agriculture as offering a high-skilled, enjoyable and well rewarded career path in order to attract the workforce the industry will need moving forward. NFU Cymru, therefore, believes developing a system of centralised information on accessing apprenticeships will be helpful. NFU Cymru would also highlight that additional effort is needed to ensure there is awareness amongst potential employers of apprenticeship programmes and apprenticeship levy payments. Welsh Government's Farming Connect programme could play an increased role in this area. NFU Cymru would also support any additional careers support given to the sector to generate interest in future learners, particularly careers advice that shows the important role farmers and land managers play within primary food production alongside sustainable land management.

Annex 1 - The Contribution of Agriculture to the Well-Being of Wales

The Welsh Government Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is designed to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act establishes seven goals that all public bodies, including Welsh Ministers, must work to achieve. The contribution that farming makes to achievement of all seven goals is unparalleled by any other industry, as highlighted in the following below:

Well Being of Future Generations Act: Well-being Goals	NFU Cymru: Agriculture is the Answer
A prosperous Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60,000 employed full or part time in farming in Wales • £1.5bn Gross Output • Farming underpins a food supply chain worth over £6bn • Over 220, 000 people in Wales are employed in the agri-food sectors – that’s 17% of the workforce and Wales’s biggest employer • The Welsh countryside managed by farmers provides the backdrop for the tourism industry worth over £2.5bn • The Welsh agricultural industry is a key generator of wealth and employment for the people of Wales
A resilient Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers care for 81% of total land area of Wales – that’s over 1.84m hectares • 600,000 ha of environmentally designated areas • Almost 560,000 ha managed under Glastir Entry Sustainable Land Management Scheme designed to combat climate change, improve water management and maintain and enhance biodiversity • Farming supports a diverse range of species, habitats and ecosystems • Farmers provide a range of ecosystem services including carbon sequestration and management, water quality and water quantity management for flood alleviation • Low carbon, local energy installations have the potential to meet 57% of Wales’s electricity consumption and the evidence shows a large proportion of projects are located within Wales’s rural local authorities • GHG emissions from agriculture have declined by 20% since 1990 and further decreases are being achieved through production efficiency measures • Welsh farmers play a key role maintaining and enhancing our natural environment and supporting the provision of a full range of ecosystem services
A healthier Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh agriculture is a key provider of safe, nutritious, high quality Welsh food which plays a fundamental contribution in supporting the physical and mental well-being of the people of Wales • Welsh farmers are known to operate to some of the highest standards of welfare and production in the whole world • Welsh farming also delivers a significant proportion of Wales’s access provision which includes 16000 miles of footpaths, 3000 miles bridleways, 1200 miles of cycle network, and 460,000 ha of open access land • Welsh farming makes a key contribution to the physical and mental well-being of the people of Wales
A more equal Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Wales is home to 33% of the Welsh population. • The vitality and potential of rural areas is closely linked to the presence of a competitive and dynamic farming sector. The

	<p>NFU Cymru 'Why farming Matters to the Welsh Economy' shows that each family farm is typically economically linked to some 40-80 other businesses in the region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through direct and indirect employment in rural communities, Welsh farming underpins the rural economy and contributes to a more equal Wales
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local communities in rural Wales are heavily dependent on agriculture for financial and social prosperity. • Leadership and voluntary roles in rural communities • Welsh farmers make a key contribution towards the provision of attractive, viable, safe communities in rural areas
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture has the highest proportion of Welsh speakers of any sector. • Farming is the bedrock of rural communities across Wales which have been shaped by farming activity spanning hundreds of years. Farmers continue to maintain these traditions, preserving rural culture and sense of place • Welsh farmers are key promoters and protectors of our culture, heritage and the Welsh language
<p>A globally responsible Wales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current levels of self-sufficiency at a UK level are at 62% • Future challenges to our global food production system include climate change, a growing UK and global population, water scarcity. Given its climate and rainfall, Wales is predicted to be an area of favoured production in the future • Welsh farmers have a key role to play feeding the people of Wales and in contributing to global food security now and in the future.