



AGM
12th October 2021

Report from the Chair, SE Wales Committee

As Chair of this CLA Cymru Branch Committee, I am pleased to welcome you as Members to our 2021 AGM. Can I also thank you Harry for kindly offering us the chance to visit your home today and it is a real pleasure to see what you are doing in this wonderful part of Wales.

As I said last year, I am very grateful for the support our members give to us both in terms of attending and contributing to meetings but also for all the invaluable advice and comments they provide in between. I am also grateful to Mark Bridgeman, President of the CLA who is joining us today and will provide an overview of what the CLA is doing on your behalf across England and Wales. Mark I look forward to hearing what you are going to say at the end of the formal business and thank you for travelling to this meeting today.

I am also grateful for the dedicated input of the CLA Cymru team to provide the advice and support you need and thank them all for this. The Welsh team has had a few changes since last year – Derek Keeble moved on to become the Membership Relations Manager. This is a critical part of the work of the team going forward- making sure we are in touch with our members and identifying where we can better provide for their needs and demonstrate how continued membership of the CLA is really important. Sarah Davies is our new Events Manager – a key role as we maintain our digital events offering as well as getting back to physical events and shows. Emily Church joined us as the new Policy and Engagement Adviser – the slight change in role to reflect the importance of making sure Welsh and UK policy is relevant and publicised to all our members.

It is particularly pleasing to see you all here today and while Covid-19 is not over, we are at least now living with this pandemic and managing to get back to some kind of normality. Business on the whole is picking up and the public has really recognised the importance of what landowners do on a day to day basis – from food production, to addressing climate change, managing land for bio-diversity and providing access for people to enjoy the countryside.

In May this year, we had the Senedd election which resulted in a Labour Government. The Minister responsible for agriculture remains in post which allows some stability for the next 5 years but of significant interest in the creation of a new “super” Ministry for Climate Change headed by Julie James MS. This department manages over a quarter of the Welsh budget and as well as the headline responsibility, holds responsibility for planning, transport,



energy, environmental protection and access amongst other policy areas. We have already met with the Minister and it was refreshing to hear that her priorities align with the aims and objectives of the CLA. We will of course be holding both the Climate Change and the other departments fully to account, but at least it feels like we are on the right track.

This provides me with a quick opportunity to highlight the flagship conference we are holding in Cardiff on the 17th November, with a keynote address by Julie James MS and to which all Members of the Senedd are being invited. Please make every effort to attend this free event if you can and show how the rural economy is so important to Wales.

At the event, we will also be launching our 5 year strategy for the CLA in Wales. This document focuses on the key themes of the Rural Powerhouse –

- A fully connected countryside
- A planning system designed for rural communities
- Profitable and sustainable farming
- Investment in skills and innovation
- A simpler tax regime

These remain more relevant than ever and our strategy will set out how we are addressing these in Wales along with a look at how the Welsh Government can support these through its Programme for Government launched last June. This is the overarching agenda for Wales over the next 5 years – and it is really important that we keep a close eye on this and ensure it can deliver for our members and their businesses.

As I close, can I thank you once again for attending this AGM and wish you all the very best for 2022.

Thank you