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To: Sustainable Land Management Agriculture and Rural Affairs Division, Welsh Government,

Consultation Document

Proposals for the Glastir Scheme, part of the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2014-2020.

Dated: 24th March 2014.

Sir/Madam,

The Cambrian Mountains Society (CMS) values this opportunity to comment on Welsh Government's proposals for the future of the agri-environment and the RDP Wales. CMS sees the evolution of Glastir as part of an important Welsh Government initiative to build a more resilient and sustainable future for Wales.

CMS was established in 2005 and now has a membership of just under 400 representing people from all backgrounds but all with a common interest in the future of the Cambrian Mountains. The Society aims to encourage cooperation across three different Unitary Authorities which happen between them to span what is in reality a single geographical entity. (Regional Landscape Character Map for Wales Area 21). The objectives of the Society include promoting, for the benefit of local communities and the wider public, measures which will sustain or enhance the landscape, natural beauty, biodiversity, archaeology, scientific interest and cultural heritage of the Cambrian Mountains.

The economy of the Cambrian Mountains is heavily dependent on agriculture, forestry and importantly tourism. All three sectors knit closely into the environment and it is in this context – the mutually supportive links between rural economy and environment – that the Society wishes to comment on in this consultation. A more detailed review of the Society's Vision for the 'Cambrians' can be found in the strategy document: *Cambrian Mountains – The Heart of Wales: Developing a Strategy for a Sustainable Future*

<http://cambrian-mountains.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/cambrian-mountains-sustainable-future.pdf>

In particular the Society wants to see in the Cambrian Mountains a strategy that will protect and possibly enhance its outstanding landscape as well as offering a firmer foundation for the rural economy of the region. CMS's favoured option for achieving its vision is for the 'Cambrians' to be designated as Wales' sixth Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

CMS sees the decision by the Minister for Natural Resources and Food to vire 15% of CAP funding away from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2 as an encouraging move towards a more sustainable rural landscape. The society hopes that this will help not only to address some of the long term challenges for Wales but also as a tool towards '*halting the decline of biodiversity, enhancing our landscape and preserving our natural heritage*'*

*Taken from Minister Alun Davies' Foreword to the Consultation Document.

At present CMS only wishes to respond to the first question of the Consultation Document.

Do you agree with Welsh Governments' proposals for rationalising the framework of agri-environment support under the next RDP?

The Society feels that the consultation exercise pays very little attention to the important role that National Parks (NPs) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty(AONBs), our protected landscapes, play in the rural economy of Wales. These iconic areas, collectively, cover approximately 25% of the Welsh landmass and their sensitive management should be better recognised in the RDP. CMS does understand that Glastir advanced funding should not be confined to *specific regional areas which might hold for example specific river catchments for water quality or upland blocks of land for peatland management.* * **However, with agriculture playing such an important part in the economy and conservation of both NPs and AONBs the Society believes that farms within them deserve enhanced funding, perhaps via the points system.** Park Authorities (NPs) and Joint Advisory Committees (AONBs) could play a role in administering/monitoring the allocated points and advanced payments within their respective landscape areas. Also our protected landscapes, with their emphasis on farming, will undoubtedly become test beds for the ecosystem services model that WG's forthcoming Environment Bill is about to introduce. The protected areas and their farming families deserve to be rewarded for this and what better way than via the RDP?

Finally can CMS once again promote the case for the Cambrian Mountains to be recognised as an AONB. The area has a long history of upland farming and its inclusion in the AONB family with the enhanced funding that is proposed here would help to sustain this community at the very heart of Wales.

*Paraphrased from Consultation Document para 2.3, page 13.

Yours

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