

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: HIDCC/PO/0243/24

Llŷr Gruffydd MS
Chair
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Welsh Parliament

16 September 2024

Dear Llŷr

Thank you for your letter of 17 July on the UK/European Forest Institute (EFI) Host Country Agreement.

The EFI is an important international organisation with which the UK has a longstanding relationship. It was set up to conduct research and provide policy advice on forest-related issues.

As far as the Host Country Agreement is concerned, we were not consulted on the decision to establish a presence in the UK. We do of course have an ongoing interest though and expect to be kept updated by the International Forests Unit (a joint FCDO and Department for Energy Security and Net Zero team) as well as on an ongoing basis through the International Forestry Advisory post in Forest Research.

The UK, as a member country, is represented on the EFI's Council by Forest Research and the Head of the International Forest Unit sits on its Board of Directors. Bangor University is a member organisation. We have a seat on the Forest Research Board and it is through that relationship that we will hear about and feed into the work of the EFI. But we will continue to engage with the International Forests Unit as work on its establishment in the UK progresses.

EFI's mission is to connect knowledge to action and to fulfil its mission, [EFI's strategy](#) is built around three interconnected and interdisciplinary themes: **Bioeconomy**, **Resilience** and **Governance** and three mutually reinforcing strategic goals:

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

- An ambitious European forest research and innovation area
- Science-informed policies to address societal challenges and opportunities
- Awareness in society of the importance of forests

Their forward look on key expected impacts for the coming period and new priorities for research and policy topics to explore in collaboration with its partners is set out in its [Strategy Implementation Plan 2022-2025](#).

We understand that the focus of the EFI's UK office will be supporting the efforts to halt and reverse the global loss of forests and land degradation. There would be two main areas of work:

- forest and land-use governance reforms in partner countries;
- transformation of degraded land into regenerative landscapes that are inclusive, biodiversity-positive and climate-neutral, which support sustainable markets and communities.

Two key programmes will be present in the UK office - **International Partnerships Facility** (<https://efi.int/partnerships>) and **Circular Bioeconomy Alliance** (<https://circularbioeconomyalliance.org>). The International Partnerships Facility is a global centre of knowledge and expertise that supports policy and governance reforms to safeguard the world's forests. It facilitates partnerships between producing and consuming countries to foster legal, deforestation-free and sustainable timber, and agricultural commodity production and trade. The FCDO will be working with the EFI to establish an International Forest Governance Hub (IFGH) that will serve a wide network of associates building from EFI's model of engagement with policy makers and research bodies. It is hoped that the IFGH will operate from the new EFI offices in the UK.

The UK office is expected to further strengthen the relationship and mutual understanding between the UK government and EFI and allow EFI experts to participate more actively in meetings and discussions happening in the UK. Once the Host Country Agreement is in place it should be easier for all UK based bodies and individuals to engage directly with the EFI due to their physical presence in the UK. We will continue to monitor how this delivers for Wales through the member organisations.

Once again, thank you for raising this important topic. I hope this information is helpful to the committee.

Yours sincerely,



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