



WELSH LIVESTOCK AUCTIONEERS' ASSOCIATION **CYMDEITHAS ARWERTHWYR DA BYW CYMRU**

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Welsh LAA Chair: Katie Davies
Welsh LAA Secretary: Zanna Dennis

Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair of Economy, Trade & Rural Affairs Committee,
Welsh Parliament,
Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff,
CF99 1SN

11th March 2025

Re: Hybu Cig Cymru/Meat Promotional Wales (HCC) Inquiry

Dear Andrew RT Davies MS,

On behalf of the Welsh Livestock Auctioneers Association (WLAA) and the national Livestock Auctioneers Association Ltd (LAA), may I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the effectiveness of Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC) in delivering on its priorities and providing value for money to levy payers as part of your inquiry.

The WLAA recognises the vital role a statutory industry-led levy organisation plays in developing, promoting and marketing produce to domestic and international markets, whilst supporting industry through training, development and market intelligence.

The Welsh red meat industry must continue to be supported by a levy organisation, to safeguard family farms that are the bedrock of rural Wales, boosting value and opportunities for Welsh produce and supporting the development and sustainability of the sector.

Whilst the WLAA and its member firms have previously engaged positively with HCC, the WLAA welcomes the inquiry to support the progression of HCC and agrees that there is work to be done to ensure HCC truly delivers for levy payers.

The membership of the WLAA run and operate 30 livestock markets and associated auctioneering businesses in Wales. In 2023, our members sold 198,000 cattle and 2.25 million sheep through the live auction ring in Wales, with these animals having a total value in excess of £398 million. Across GB, the live auction ring accounts for 56% of sales of slaughter sheep and 85% of sales of store and breeding livestock, with 93% of livestock farmers, when completing a recent poll, suggesting that they had used a livestock market in the preceding year.

We are proud to represent the only marketing scheme in agriculture that offers an open, competitive and transparent marketing platform, one that is offered to all livestock farmers, is

unrivalled and has stood the test of time, in the format that we know it today, for more than 200 years.

Livestock markets are one of the few places that all farmers, but importantly, the “hard to reach” sector of our industry, meet, chat and trade on a regular basis. Livestock markets play a pivotal role in keeping these farmers better informed and aware of new schemes, opportunities and changes to regulations. The live ring offers farmers an unrivalled benchmarking tool when comparing values obtained for livestock sold, and the opportunity to discuss the various market specifications and requirements directly with those that buy the stock. In addition, recent research has shown the pivotal roles markets play in supporting farmers beyond the point of sale, through the provision of mental health and wellbeing services in livestock markets.

Given the value of the livestock market industry to the Welsh agricultural sector, as detailed above, and the critical role played within the red meat supply chain, the WLAA and its members have long been disappointed by the lack of representation of the liveweight sector within the work of HCC, with many perceiving HCC to strongly favour deadweight methods of sale.

As the statutory industry-led levy organisation for Wales, HCC must provide equal representation and opportunities for both the liveweight and deadweight sectors, in marketing and intelligence, research and development, case studies and on the HCC board. The WLAA would welcome the opportunity to support HCC in providing stronger representation of the live auction ring throughout its work and would be open to discussions to provide representation of the liveweight sector on the HCC board.

The WLAA believes it is essential that HCC delivers market intelligence for the liveweight sector, alongside the existing market intelligence that is provided for the deadweight sector, to provide a true representation of the industry, to support on-farm decision making, delivering for the levy payer. The WLAA has continued to engage with HCC on this matter for the past 15 months, unfortunately to no avail. The WLAA continues to offer its support.

Like many organisations, the WLAA feels that unfortunately HCC suffers from poor communications of its work and benefits to levy payers. Our feeling, from engaging with farmers through our livestock markets, is that many are unaware of the services, support and opportunities available to them through HCC and do not understand the value of the levy organisation to them as small farming businesses. To progress, and sustain industry support, HCC must improve its communications to levy payers.

Whilst costly in time and resources, it is widely accepted that in-person communications are most effective in rapidly growing support and understanding. The WLAA and its members would welcome the presence of HCC representatives within their livestock markets and believe this would in turn provide great value and opportunity for HCC to engage with levy payers, including the “hard to reach”.

In October 2024, the WLAA met with HCC representatives to discuss further engagement with the livestock market industry. A positive meeting promised a more proactive and engaged approach, however, unfortunately the evidence of this is yet to be seen.

The WLAA is aware of recent internal challenges within HCC which appear to have been costly both in financial terms and resource, limiting HCC’s ability to deliver for, and engage with, levy payers. This has caused great concern and must not be allowed to happen again.

With the agricultural industry facing unprecedented challenges, and the impact of Brexit continuing to be felt, HCC must move forward, redefining its purposes, activities and communications to effectively support the Welsh red meat industry and develop new markets for Welsh produce within the UK and throughout the world.

If you require any further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zanna Dennis', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Zanna Dennis
LAA Development Officer
Welsh LAA Secretary
www.laa.co.uk