

Vaughan Gething AS/MS
Gweinidog yr Economi
Minister for Economy



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref VG/00573/23

James Evans MS
MS for Brecon and Radnorshire

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16 October 2023

Dear James,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 12 June and 12 July regarding Gilestone Farm. I apologise for the delay in responding.

It is vitally important that the statutory processes which need to take place as part of due diligence are allowed to proceed without interference or undue influence during this next stage. However, where possible, I am providing further detail in response to the questions and points you have raised in your correspondence.

You suggest in your e-mail of 12 July that you were not made aware that I would not be attending the meeting of 8 June until “that same day”. This is misleading. You were informed of the Welsh Government’s intentions in this regard more than three weeks in advance. The First Minister made it abundantly clear in his response to your Oral Question in the Senedd on 16 May that it was the Welsh Government’s view that a public meeting was not an appropriate platform to discuss these matters and therefore we would not be engaging with the event, and I made this clear to you in a direct conversation outside of the chamber. Following the meeting on 8 June, my officials received a number of letters from attendees presenting this as “fact” which is unfortunate considering the already high levels of misinformation circulating within the community.

In relation to the quoted figures on proposed economic impact of proposals, the figures are taken from the Green Man business plan and are not Welsh Government figures. For clarity, it is not under consideration for the Green Man Festival to move to Gilestone Farm. The proposal from representatives of Green Man is to expand the Green Man brand to develop related and complimentary activities.

Regarding the relevant permissions, licences and environmental assessments required with regards to the proposal, it will be the responsibility of the representatives of Green Man to secure the required permissions in order for the activities contained within the business plan to proceed. This is subject to a lease being agreed for the site. Appropriate management of the site, including ensuring that all activities undertaken comply with the relevant statutory obligations of the lease-holder, will be controlled by Welsh Government

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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.

through the lease, should agreement be reached. Discussions on the lease agreement are ongoing and it would be inappropriate for these commercial negotiations to play out in the public sphere. However, we can confirm that these negotiations will be undertaken on the basis of securing market value for the property.

Regarding details of the economic benefits and the environmental impact of proposals on the site, due diligence is ongoing and as such, it would be inappropriate to comment further on the process or the details contained within the business plan at this time. However, with regards to your question on genetically modified crops, the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms into the environment is strictly controlled. Any proposals to grow genetically modified crops would require Welsh Ministers' consent under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) (Wales) Regulations 2002. There are no such discussions currently ongoing.

In relation to the concerns you raise on behalf of residents and environmentalists about rare species, the Welsh Government and representatives of Green Man are wholly committed to ensuring the appropriate management of the SAC and SSSI designations at Gilestone Farm. It has been repeatedly stated that no activities will be permitted to be undertaken at Gilestone Farm without the required licences and permissions having been secured, and the appropriate environmental assessments being undertaken.

Regarding any plans to make any further investment on this site, we are not aware of any plans that would be expected to apply for funding. Should any future opportunities be identified, Green Man and its associated companies would be expected to apply for any future funding via the same mechanisms as all other applicants.

Regarding your request for a copy of a risk register, it is not usual practice for the Welsh Government to publish its risk registers which include key control measures and mitigations. However, we can confirm that the identified risks associated with Gilestone Farm are captured through usual risk management processes.

The approach to fishing and sporting rights over Gilestone Farm is a matter for discussion between Mr Beor-Roberts and the Welsh Government.

We will not be publishing any information on assessments related to the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 prior to the decision being made, but any decision being made will ensure that it fully conforms with the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

I note your questions on the need for investment in this area and whether consideration has been given to supporting and expanding existing developments in Mid Wales, such as the Royal Welsh Show. The region faces well established demographic challenges as described in Growing Mid Wales, a partnership between local government, Welsh and UK Government. This clear challenge reinforces the need to work collectively to ensure appropriate rural economic development can flourish to create the jobs and supply chain opportunities, which thriving communities depend on. We are committed to helping more young people plan ambitious futures in Mid Wales because they will define the long-term success of the regional economy. Our support for a sustainable rural business opportunity at Gilestone Farm specifically aligns with the goals set out in the Mid Wales Growth Deal, which was signed by both the Welsh and UK governments in 2022. The Royal Welsh Agricultural Society continues to receive support from, for example, a recently agreed funding deal of £110,000 per annum. We would consider any future proposals from the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, or other sites in Mid Wales, taking account of the availability of Welsh Government funding.

As I have said previously, community engagement is being coordinated through Talybont-on-Usk Community Council, as the organisation with a democratic mandate and purposed for that end. My officials held a good meeting with the Community Council on Tuesday 19 September, of which there is a positive note on the Community Council website. In relation to the request that surrounding Community Councils be consultees as part of the planning process, there are opportunities for individuals to submit questions on the proposal on the www.gilestonefarmproject.co.uk website that has been established by representatives of Green Man. The Welsh Government is not considering a change in the planning regulations based on the proposal for Gilestone Farm and we will continue working with Talybont-on-Usk Community Council as key consultees.

Since your correspondence, you will have heard that a breeding pair of Ospreys had been sighted on Gilestone Farm. Both the Welsh Government and Green Man pride themselves on their environmental credentials and agree that following the discovery of the breeding pair and their nest, our priority should be the birds' welfare and protection. Both adult birds have left the site as of 14 September, but we hope that they will return to their constructed nest next Spring. Officials are working with relevant experts to prepare a protection and management plan for the site.

Following completion of next steps, and once I have reached a decision, I will make an oral statement to Members.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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