



TIRWEDDAU'R  
DYFODOL  
FUTURE LANDSCAPES



# FUTURE LANDSCAPES SYMPOSIUM

## 9-10 May 2019 REPORT

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# 1. BACKGROUND

This document includes the conclusions from two days of discussions, workshops and presentations at the 'Future Landscapes' symposium hosted by Ceredigion Museum. The report features analysis of questions posed by invited speakers, links to online presentations recorded during the symposium and feedback from participants.

The purpose of the symposium focussed on creating a dialogue around the future of uplands in Ceredigion. The 'Future Landscapes' symposium grew out of the project 'Sheep' which was developed by Ceredigion Museum. The project included an art exhibition of the same name at the museum gallery, April-June, 2019.

'Sheep' is a dialogue around the upland landscape of mid Wales. The exhibition addressed the debates around shifting awareness of the upland landscape – or rather *change* in the landscape – exploring Ceredigion's history, heritage and culture as a sheep-farming community. The Museum explored these ideas using artefacts from its own collection, works of art borrowed from the Tate collection, and works by artists living in rural Wales today.

Important conversations are taking place in Wales locally and nationally around uses of the land. As a county museum with a significant collection representing Ceredigion's traditional agricultural heritage, we feel a responsibility to join in the dialogue with our communities about our future. Most of the work in the exhibition depicts sheep in some way, or the land and people that support sheep farming.

We explore the religious significance of sheep and their symbolism throughout art history, which has deep resonance in a primarily Methodist community of farmers.

We have chosen to exhibit artists who explore different themes of rurality and farming, including people, place, politics, history, geography, biology and landscape. Miranda Whall is working on a series of pieces relating to landscape; the first, called *Crossed Paths* looks at the story of the mountains of Wales told from the perspective of a sheep. Short & Forward moved from Bristol five years prior to rural Ceredigion where they are developing a new site for critical debate, contemporary art and artist's residencies on their smallholding. For this exhibition they showcase *Dai and Nancy*, a poignant short film that follows life in a sheep-farming valley, alongside a series of sculptures and installations that reference 'easy care' sheep, rare breeds that are at risk, and an installation of over 200 ewe hoof casts from the land around their farm, all reflecting the fragility of farming in the Welsh uplands.

Several of the artists are from farming backgrounds themselves, including the photographer Marian Delyth, Cardiff-based Carwyn Evans and Christine Mills. Mills' arts practice has for many years used wool in her work, drawing on stories of the farmers and their survival. The work of Morag Colquhoun looks in detail at the upland ecology and biology during residencies in the Elan Valley, and on Bardsey Island.

We also commissioned an artist to work directly with the sheep-farming community, Ffon Jones. An artist, a lecturer at Aberystwyth University, and a farmer, she



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## 2. DAY 1

produced a film installation in the Museum's woollen looms (third floor gallery) that features interviews with ten farmers from the local area. Her questions, including 'what do sheep mean to you?', draw out the relationships that farmers have with their flocks. Other works spill over from the gallery into the Museum's permanent displays: sheep sculptures within the ceramics section, sheep films in the cinema, all of which play on the Coliseum's natural sense of serendipity and theatre.

Alongside these works we are exhibiting five loans from the Tate collection. The pictures, include three drawings of sheep from Henry Moore's sketchbooks, a Joseph Beuys drawing of two sheep skulls, and *Sheep B*, a screen-print on paper by the Israeli artist Menashe Kadishman, whose trademark subject is sheep.

### The Event

65 people attended the presentations and participants came from across sectors with representation from farming communities such as the National Farmers Union, along with input from cross-generational agricultural professionals. We also had curators, policy makers, scientists, geographers and artists to name a few. Addressing themes in today's debate about the landscape of mid Wales through panel discussions and workshops, the symposium discussed the future of the land and its uses in the context of a broad spectrum of disciplines.

In addition there were around a dozen additional people who weren't able to attend, but contributed and responded to the report and the presentations. The content will also be made available online to download from the Museum's website.

### Walk and Talk

#### Film screening in Cwm Rheidol

9 May 12pm

The symposium began in Cwm Rheidol where 30 people met at The Arch above the Hafod Estate, and then drove up through the forest and the mountain to take part in a short walk to Pen-y-Garn. The weather wasn't looking great for the day with a heavy mist and varying levels of rain through the morning, but it didn't put us off and in many ways contributed to the experience. It was pertinent to begin the event in the uplands, surrounded by the landscape due to be discussed in some detail.

An introduction to the Cambrian Mountains Initiative was given by Ieuan Joyce, Chair of the Elan Valley Trust, and John Davies of Pwllpeiran, who had some imperative local insight. Esther Wakeling, a Project Officer for the Initiative discussed many other themes but helped to define the project that was 'wide-ranging, and that aims to help promote rural enterprise, protect the environment and add value to products and services in mid Wales'.

Following the walk and talk we drove back down the mountain (some of us taking accidental detours through the Cefn Croes windfarm) and dropped down into the wooded river valley of Cwm Rheidol to have lunch at Capel Bethel, an arts studio space run by Louise Short and Alice Forward. Following lunch we watched *In Our Hands*, a film by the Landworkers Alliance, which we reviewed as a group before heading out into the field below the chapel to 'imagine' possible futures for the farm.



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## 2. DAY 1

### Short&Forward Presentation Workshop at Capel Bethel, Cwmrheidol 9 May



Artists Alice Forward and Louise Short showcased the film *In Our Hands*, produced by Holly Black for the charity Landworkers Alliance (Seeding Change <https://inourhands.film>)

‘All change begins with a story and *In Our Hands* is the story of the farmers who, through hope, hard graft and sheer bloody-mindedness are refusing to be victims of history. This one-hour documentary takes you on a journey across the fields of Britain, past the orchards of forgotten fruit and through the fields of ancient grains. The film reveals both the wisdom of the old and the innovations of the young, who are bringing back the worm to the soil, the “culture” to “agriculture”, and the flavour to the tomato! We stand on a brink, the swallows are departing, but the future of this land is still *In Our Hands*.’

This passionate and well-researched film was intended to inspire lively discussion about issues such as sustainability and food sovereignty facing farmers today, both locally and globally, and it certainly did. Despite some scepticism, the audience raised an impressive £70 towards the Landworkers Alliance that afternoon when the hat went round.

The second part of the discussion took place in the centre of the six-acre front field of Troedrhiwsebon, currently hosting sheep as grasskeep.

As an exercise in stretching lateral thought, everyone was invited to imagine what, in a world without sheep, they might like to see the land being used for. A lively debate took place, with almost everyone contributing, from many different standpoints.

[www.capelbethel.org](http://www.capelbethel.org)

Capel Bethel is a new rural site for critical debate, contemporary art, music and events, which opened in April 2019 after lying abandoned for nearly forty years. Situated in an idyllic spot within the Rheidol Valley and surrounded by protected ancient woodland, it also offers short residencies to both local and international artists and writers (in conjunction with neighbouring Troedrhiwsebon Farm), as well as being open to local community events.

*‘A grassroots union of farmers, growers and land-based workers with a mission to improve the livelihoods of it’s members and to create a better food system for everyone. We are members of La Via Campesina, the global movement of small-scale producers and peasant farmers.’*

Quote from the Landworkers Alliance website



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## 2. DAY 1

### Reception and tour of the 'Sheep' exhibition

We convened in the evening at Ceredigion Museum for a tour of the 'Sheep' exhibition by assistant curator Alice Briggs. Beginning in the gallery Alice described the curation and planning that had gone into the exhibition. She also touched on accommodating the five loans from the Tate collection, along with the contribution of the seven artists associated with the project, a significant challenge to manage in itself.

The museum has been borrowing works of arts for many years from partners such as the National Library of Wales and University of Aberystwyth. However, due to the need for additional security, the Museum was constrained on the type of artworks it could loan and exhibit. But, with a recent redevelopment of the building, and also with the aid of loans (Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund and the Tate Ferryman bursary project), the Museum was able to take the next step in enhancing the facilities. Examples include a tamper proof exhibition case up to GIS standard that can be used for a wide variety of loans in the future.

The opportunity to bring high-profile contemporary art to supplement the artwork in the exhibition allowed us to introduce contemporary art to a new audience i.e. rural and isolated Welsh-language farming communities. We were curious how the work would be viewed by the Welsh farming community.

Would viewing sheep as a subject, through a different lens, provide a different perspective on a familiar theme? This was the challenge we posed to ourselves which naturally led to thinking about accommodating other unfamiliar audiences.

We projected that the higher profile would bring in visitors curious to see artwork from national collections, people from the local area who might not otherwise visit, along with dedicated visitors from further afield, and an interest from general tourism.

As noted earlier, several of the artworks had been deliberately placed in separate locations around the Museum to encourage serendipitous encounters. The siting of the commissioned piece 'We are the Flock' by Ffion Jones on the third floor in the loom display has been particularly successful, drawing audiences to see the film (which features local people talking about their personal experiences as sheep farmers). Many of the local visitors had not ventured up to the third floor of the Museum in several years, and had forgotten that there were many more exhibits to experience.

Ffion Jones gave the symposium participants an insightful talk on the way she had approached the commission and the importance of her own background as a sheep farmer in framing the artwork.



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### 3. DAY 2 IBERS: INTRODUCTION

#### **CEREDIGION MUSEUM – A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE FUTURE.**

**Alice Briggs, Assistant Curator Ceredigion Museum**



Some of you may be wondering why a museum has convened an event titled 'Future Landscapes' and I just wanted to explain a little bit about how it came to be. At the Museum we safeguard a fantastic collection of items relating to the history of Ceredigion, including a large selection of agricultural tools, machinery and items describing domestic life.

As curators of our nations' heritage and culture, conserving and interpreting artefacts and artworks has an important role, not only in preserving the past, but also in shaping the future, and there is no better time for this conversation.



I was brought up as first-generation Welsh on Mynydd Bach, surrounded by the rich heritage, culture, and language of the rural farming communities. I feel a deep connection to the surrounding land, heritage and culture. It forms a significant part of the 'milltir sgwar' (my patch) phenomena I learn about every day through my work at Ceredigion Museum.

Now, with three children myself and settled in rural Ceredigion, my family's life is deeply connected to the outdoors and to the close-knit community around me, reminiscent of my own childhood. However, from what I see in the wider world and from what research tells us about how much children (and people) spend outdoors it seems

people, in general, are losing their connections with the natural cycles around us. Increasingly people see themselves as 'other' to the land and to nature, rather than existing in communion with their environment. So how do we reconnect those broken cycles in a way that respects the environment but also respects the communities of people whose culture and heritage has been built on this land?

I also see increasingly polarised views on how we utilise our land and its resources and this event is an important bridging point where we can discuss these views with mutual tolerance and understanding. Working collaboratively is key if we want to enact meaningful change, but it's important that the rural communities of Ceredigion aren't negatively impacted.

It often feels that many of the proposals for change are coming from outside our communities, and that the demands for change don't include the people who care and manage the uplands and the rural landscape of Wales. I would argue that we need to be better at demanding transformation that works for us. For example, ridding ourselves of cars to reduce our carbon footprint doesn't work when travel distances are great, and not helped by poorly-implemented public transport. These are the types of arguments we need to be bolder about communicating. We also have the skills and expertise to be innovative and radical if the resources are provided. When the skills aren't there, we can work together to implement the solution or train the necessary requirements.

The event 'Future Landscapes' forms part of a wider project, 'Sheep' which included an art exhibition at Ceredigion



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### 3. INTRODUCTION

Museum. As well as unique artefacts from the past, we have a small but significant art collection around which the exhibition was framed. The museum also commissioned a piece by artist Ffion Jones, who has worked directly with Welsh-language farming communities. Further to this we showcased work by artists from or based in Wales which were exhibited alongside the five pieces on loan from the Tate collection, which included works by Henry Moore, Menashe Kadishman and Joseph Beuys.

There are many ways to access these important discussions about our future, but artists – whether writers, poets, musicians, performers or visual artists – are often at the intersection between ideas, science, people and politics in a way that other communicators can only hope to come close. Artists are the storytellers, the provocateurs, and the interpreters that can help to thread people and ideas together.

With climate change growing higher on the political agenda, and the emergence of new groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Greta Thunberg's schools climate strikes, what can we do to help? We are lucky in Wales that we already have the The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015), which positions working collaboratively with our communities centrally. It targets environmental responsibility to deliver a prosperous, resilient and healthy Wales in a global community. As a public body, Ceredigion Museum (and broader still Ceredigion County Council) is now legally required to find ways to achieve those goals. We have an opportunity to be a bridge between communities, and to facilitate conversations about our past and future.

In order to do this we have been working on some interesting projects in partnership with several leading organisations looking to enact change, including:

Common Cause, who work to place values that prioritise community, environment, and equality at the heart of cultural, political and civic institutions;

Happy Museum Project who work with museums to embed principles relating to citizenship, well-being, resilience, relationship building, measuring what matters and most importantly in relation to this project 'valuing the environment and being an active steward of the future, as well as the past'.

I'm really grateful to all who gave up their free time to visit and take part in the discussions and I'd particularly like to thank all our speakers, Ceredigion Museum staff and volunteers for their contributions before, during and after the event. I'd also like to thank the Weston Loan programme with Art Fund who have sponsored the event, and also the 'Sheep' exhibition funders – the Ferryman Bursary with Tate and the Arts Council of Wales.

We have the opportunity to listen, share, make connections and hopefully develop new projects together and to help build a future landscape that works for us all.



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## 4. PUTTING THE CONVERSATION IN CONTEXT

**Ieuan Joyce, Chair [Elan Valley Trust](#)**

*Dr Ieuan Joyce farms in Ceredigion and Herefordshire, combining biodiversity and food production objectives. His interests include nature conservation and sustainable rural development.*

Passionate about sheep! But also...

dependent upon sheep for the income they bring, as are so many in the Welsh farming community. Sheep are a productive and economic unit within a range of constraints. If the profit on one ewe is £30 per annum, multiply that by the number of sheep you keep to determine an annual income, your ability to support your family to live in the countryside.

A complex interaction between sheep, humans, landscape and nature has shaped the mid-Wales landscape, culture and way of life as we know it today. This interaction dates back in a meaningful way since medieval times, probably much longer. Certainly, little has changed in terms of sheep numbers on our hills since reliable records became available in the 1870s. This is not to say that no change has occurred, recently sheep numbers on the hills have declined well below the long term average, while sheep numbers have increased on the 'middle' land. At the same time there has been a loss in diversity in farming practice (fewer cattle, silage not hay, little rhos hay or small scale arable) and there has been a marked increase in the area of land farmed under agri-environment prescriptions.

There has also been a concerning and dramatic loss in the upland breeding bird assemblage that was, until very recently, a highly valued part of the mid-Wales upland landscape. Birds that have been lost or rarely seen are: curlew, lapwing, golden plover, dunlin, ring ouzel, red grouse, redshank, redstart, stonechat, whinchat, teal, common sandpiper, and the wheatear.

The causes of these losses are no doubt complex. However, getting back to a nature-rich landscape is important for all of us, as is securing the range of services provided by our landscape: carbon storage, water, food, recreation, well-being, energy. It seems logical to suggest that taking another look at the farming practices we have lost and the policy initiatives that have led to these losses, would be a good starting point. It is also important to keep in mind the local historical, cultural, economic and community sensitivities and values that are tied up around sheep.



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## 5a. WHY SHEEP? JOHN DAVIES

### A LOOK AT WHY LIVESTOCK FARMING HAS BECOME THE DOMINANT LAND USE IN THE UPLANDS OF CEREDIGION (PWLLPEIRAN)

John Davies, [Pwllpeiran Research Centre](#), Business Manager.

*John is well connected in the agricultural sector with previous roles at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Trawscoed, then as a livestock procurement officer for a livestock co-operative, followed by a period as an agricultural estate agent and auctioneer. He worked for NFU Cymru as a policy adviser for nine years and for the past twelve years he was the Director of Food Centre Wales, providing state of the art technical support for the Welsh Agri-Food industry.*

John introduced Pwllpeiran and its context historically as part of the Hafod estate, and as a peat bog and carbon store. The upland research platform was initiated at Pwllpeiran in 2014 (although the research centre itself has been there since the 1930s), it is being developed by Aberystwyth University IBERS (Institute for Biological and Earth Sciences) and is supported by a £2.5million investment from the BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council).

The uplands are also important in terms of holding water and flood prevention. Peat is the UK's largest terrestrial carbon store – there is more carbon locked in peat than in the forests of Britain, Germany and Belgium combined. They are the backdrop to a multi-million pound tourist industry.

Peat bogs hold habitats of important international conservation. The research centre was set up specialising in the trials of food security, greenhouse gas reduction and protection of biodiversity. These problems require informed and improved use of the uplands through the development of new plants and animal systems. Innovative, science-driven approaches are being developed to meet these challenges, with Pwllpeiran and IBERS well-positioned to lead the UK uplands agenda.

The Pwllpeiran Upland Research Platform is focussing on future opportunities for the benefit of the upland farming community throughout the UK and beyond.

John summarised his presentation with suggestions for the 'future of the uplands', a question which he then put forward to the audience to answer.

Key points for the future:

- Don't forget the past.
- Don't turn our backs on the community that lives in the uplands.
- Use sheep and a variety of other grazers to our advantage in their natural habitat.
- Seek to develop and grow different plants and new types of crops.
- Use science to find sensible answers.



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## 5b. WHY SHEEP?

### WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE UPLANDS?

#### Answers from the participants

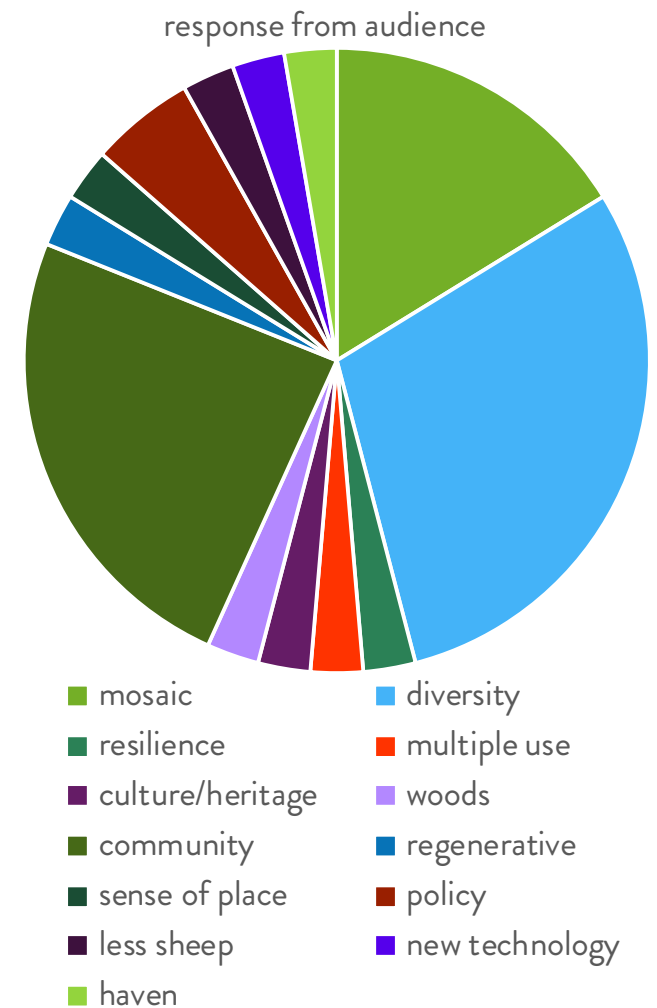
The majority of participants' feedback included the need to have a diverse, mosaic-style approach to the use of the uplands. Other important themes included the need to develop resilience, an awareness of the culture and heritage of the uplands, and its sense of place and importance as a 'haven'. Alongside this, changes in policy and use of new technologies to move forward were also considered important.

*'UK cattle herd has reduced by 24% over last 30 years, sheep flocks in the uplands have reduced sharply as we've seen. Biodiversity has reduced, monoculture forestry has increased since WWII. These are all connected and are guided by political decisions. Current trends show the end result will be low biodiversity of fir trees and mollinae.'*

*'Mosaics – this was mentioned earlier in terms of curlews needs – I like the term! Adapting "mosaic thinking" regarding the uplands. Decentral thinking/action. Mutual benefit co-operation.'*

*'A lived-in landscape that produces high-quality food and where nature thrives. A place that benefits society and which is also enjoyed by people.'*

*'Mixed woodland and grassland (which implies some grazing) while protecting potential and actual carbon storage. Habitat biodiversity without precluding small scale food production.'*



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# 5b. WHY SHEEP? TRYSOR

## GRAZING AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Jenny Hall and Peter Sambrook

**TRYSOR** Archaeological and heritage consultants

*Trysor is a heritage consultancy based in south-west Wales but working across Wales and beyond. Trysor was started by Jenny Hall and Paul Sambrook in 2004. Both partners are experienced archaeologists and heritage professionals and personally undertake most of Trysor's work.*

Livestock farming in the Ceredigion uplands did not become dominant, it was always so since the age of the first farmers. Consequently, we are dealing with a human landscape, not a natural landscape. The upland pastures are the product of thousands of years of human decision making.

Palaeoenvironmental evidence from the peat bog at Gors Lwyd, in the upper Elan Valley, gives some insight into environmental conditions in the late glacial and early prehistoric periods. By 8,000 BC, it would appear that birch woodland was established in hollows and valleys, gradually spreading onto the hills.

At Pwll Nant Ddu and Esgair Nantybeddau, over 5km to the south of Gors Lwyd, charcoal fragments dating to circa 7,500 BC were found, evidence of the first human impact on the area. Conditions were much damper, but a rise in alder pollens after 6200 BC meant a transition to more open conditions with heather, grass and sedge pollens increasing by circa 5,000 BC. This may well be evidence of woodland clearances for hunting, with the open hills being

used to graze domesticated animals during the Neolithic period.

By the late Neolithic (2200BC), human activity was also undoubtedly a factor in environmental change and the appearance of pollens associated with cultivation at Gors Lwyd, including English Plantain, indicates that domesticated animals were almost certainly grazing in the area by the early Bronze Age.

*'The first river be side Tyue that I passid over was Clardue, that is to say Blak Clare, no great streame but cumming thorough craggies. In the farther side of hit I saw ii. veri poore cotagis for somer dayres for catel, and hard by were ii. hilletes, thorough the wich Clarduy passith, wher they fable that a gigant striding was wont to wasch his hondes, and that Arture killid hym. The dwellers say also that the gigant was buried therby, and shew the place.'*

John Leland 1530s

TRYSOR then went on to discuss the problems of conserving heritage in areas where 'rewilding' management is taking place, and explaining the damage that it causes ancient monuments and sites of historical interest. This problem was then put forward to the audience in the form of a question around preservation of heritage in the future.



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## 5b. WHY SHEEP?

### WOULD YOU BE PREPARED TO STOP GRAZING AND SACRIFICE HERITAGE AND TOURISM IN THE UPLANDS?

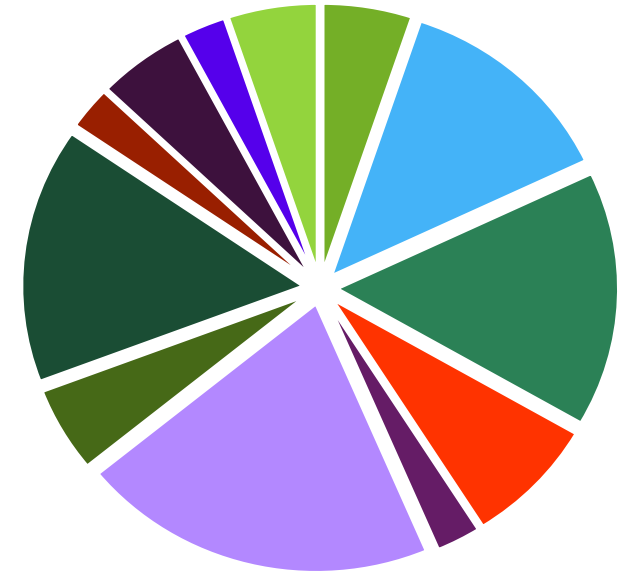
#### Answers from the participants

The overall feeling from the audience was that the question was leading and simplistic, therefore it was difficult to answer in an open way, and the debate didn't have a clear yes/no answer. We need to think beyond dichotomies and work together to devise different solutions, and to be careful to look at each site on its own merit rather than suggesting fit-all solutions. Several people responded with other options or questions:

*'Is it possible to turn back time and pretend that we haven't already impossibly changed this land?'*

*'There needs to be some way of prioritising sites which should be preserved and others that can be sacrificed. Not a single solution for all.'*

*'In 30 years time, for a society in the grips of climate change, failing crops and shortages, and economic resource-driven migration; will tourism be relevant? A luxury or out-dated concept. Our heritage will be focussed on the behaviour of the previous generations who created this new world.'*



- yes would be prepared
- no wouldn't be prepared
- too simplistic
- not an either /or B/W
- climate change
- other options
- sacrifice
- compromise
- balanced grazing systems
- ok, with reservations
- tourism can change
- answered with question
- yes, allow some



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## 5c. WHY SHEEP? PROF. PETER MIDMORE

### CONFLICTING VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF SHEEP IN THE WELSH UPLANDS

Professor Peter Midmore, Aberystwyth University

*Peter Midmore is an agricultural economist whose research has focused on rural economic development, especially in a Welsh context. His most recent work has explored the economic impact of agricultural research science, and the role of farm and family relationships on the resilience of agricultural businesses.*

Peter Midmore explained that there was no clear consensus on the complex and controversial role of sheep in the upland landscape. He used the psychological concept of the mindset, an established set of attitudes held by an individual or group, to illuminate why conflict is difficult to resolve. Mindsets are used to process facts and observations and can be strongly influenced by prior judgements and values. Divergent mindsets lead to differing interpretation of the same facts or observations; interaction between individuals holding similar collective mindsets reinforce these perceptions.

He outlined three recognisable mindsets about sheep in the Welsh uplands: Neoliberal economics questions market intervention as the source from which much conflict in the uplands arises; rural development/food security sees farmers as socially-beneficial managers of upland grazings, prioritising traditional socio-economic organisation; restoration ecologists envisage much less farming, allowing natural systems to revert to pre-agricultural states.

Dealing with the first mindset, mainstream economists identify the role of tariffs, quotas and subsidies as distorting

the market for food. Sheep farming is not itself highly protected, but EU grain prices are and lead to higher prices of alternative meats, making grass-fed livestock appear less expensive to consumers. The overall cost of agricultural protection is about 1% of GDP, but high food prices affect poorer people more. If protection was abandoned, more sheep would be produced by lowland agriculture, only the most efficient upland farmers would stay in business, and hill land would be freed up for carbon-absorbing forestry.

However, since the 1970s, conventional economics have become increasingly mathematical and reliant on simplifying assumptions. Two of its key ideas, infinite divisibility (both of inputs and outputs), and constant returns to scale break down, particularly for upland farming. Farms are long-term family businesses, shaped by soils, microclimates, and the structure of surrounding holdings. They are space-intensive and location-constrained, handed down across generations, generating pride, attachment to land, and a sense of vocation. This embedding of farming businesses in their social and cultural context means that they will not collectively behave as theory suggests.

The second mindset is associated with improving the technical, environmental and economic performance of pastoral agriculture, allowing it to maintain and improve its position as the driving force of the rural economy. It recognises fragility in farm family business, and sees the cultural and social dimension of farming as assets that need nurturing to support delivery of public and private services to remote areas. On a broader scale, it is concerned for the trilemma of global population growth, habitat loss and climate change, arguing that all farming assets will be needed for the future, and should not be neglected for short-term considerations. This vision is not about sheep



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## 5c. WHY SHEEP?

*per se*, but how the animal can become more climate smart and habitat friendly, combining genetic improvement, land management and socio-economic insight to engineer a more socially acceptable, environmentally-friendly form of upland farming.

One of the chief flaws of this mindset is nostalgia. People commonly regard previous decades as golden ages, fading out the adverse attributes and understating current benefits. Farming in the Welsh uplands is no exception; current resilience of farming systems was forged in poor conditions, difficult quality of life, and TB a recent memory. The number of holdings, especially full-time holdings that support a family, has declined so much that farming is essentially detached from the rest of the rural economy. Its importance is so limited that complete cessation would be economically unremarkable (less, for example, than the effects of budgetary austerity on local authorities), although the environment would be directly and substantially affected.

The third mindset is less clear-cut, encompassing controversies centred on an ironic paradox. There is agreement that human activity has caused ecological change, but dissent over what primitive myth should be the benchmark for optimal ecosystem functioning (e.g., the interglacial period or the early Holocene have quite different implications). Also, a view widely shared among restoration ecologists is that establishment of any kind of self-regulating ecosystem would require deliberative management, rather than achieving restoration, rewilding might result in a completely novel ecosystem with unforeseen functional outcomes.

However, while such confusion makes rewilding appear less robust than either a Neoliberal or ruralist mindset, it is important to understand what popularises it as an alternative. The ecological crisis, combining soil erosion, habitat loss, climate change and urban pressures, threatens ecosystems services which appear to be undervalued by governments and business. While economic growth has led to ever greater levels of material consumption, none of this has produced a net gain in social welfare, whether measured informally or through systematic methods. A combination of these issues has led to environmental anxiety. The resulting popular frustration at apparent if not actual lack of urgency in dealing with these existential concerns sees farming extensification as much better than intensification, and in extremis, reducing management to zero would be best of all.

The discussion was summarised by considering the slow and incremental process of reduction of conflicts between these very different mindsets. The important first step should recognise why they developed and how they work. Mutual recognition of concerns can help: the ruralist mindset must explain how more or better sheep than at present can combine with reversal of declining ecosystem services; the rewilding mindset must demonstrate how less intensive management of upland areas can be reconciled with maintaining livelihoods of farm families and their historically-rooted, cherished community practises. In economics, an emerging and recently much stronger view is that resilience, rather than growth, should be the main target of policies. Shifting this ground of discussion could have huge potential impact, and benefit all diverse perspectives on the role of sheep in the Welsh uplands.



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## 5c. WHY SHEEP?

**CAN YOU THINK OF WAYS IN WHICH YOUR VISION OF THE FUTURE LANDSCAPES COULD ACCOMMODATE THE HOPES OF PEOPLE NOT SHARED IN YOUR VISION?**

### **Answers from the participants**

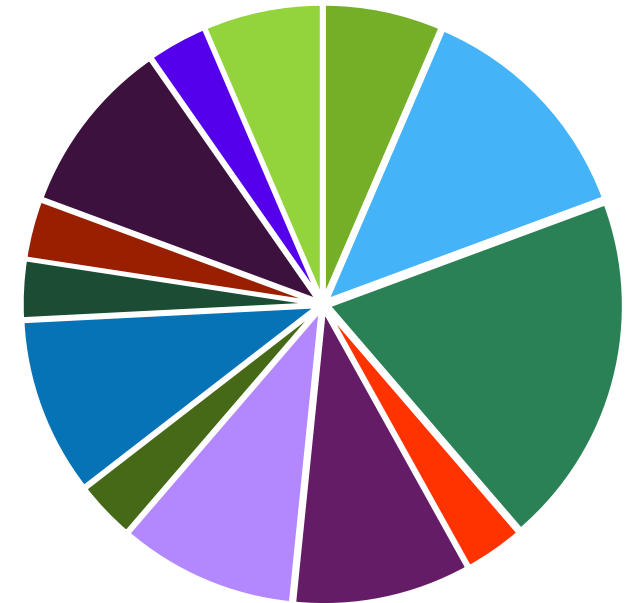
The clear theme coming out from the feedback was the need for us to listen to each other. Key words included the need to communicate, work together and compromise and use mixed farming systems. Evaluating the different systems and using outcomes based methods of working was also seen as key.

*'Demonstrate by example, persuade by showing them what can/has been achieved by learning to live differently.'*

*'Communication is key. We cannot sit in silos.'*

*'To break down the barriers us/them. Identify one common goal within all views. Compromise maybe the only way. Especially English or Welsh incomer, urban or rural, farmer or conservationist.'*

*'Create economic conditions that reward landholders for productivity. A balance of food and biodiversity according to the potential of the local land while restraining extreme food and wood production, and not allowing rewilding that has no place in human culture and advancement.'*



- compromise
- mixed farming system
- communication
- community cooperation
- evaluation
- outcome based working
- cultural heritage
- listen
- openmindedness
- empathy
- policy





## 6a. ART IN THE FARMING LANDSCAPE WHAT CAN ARTISTS OFFER TO THE CONVERSATION?

### **‘NI YW’R DIADELL / WE ARE THE FLOCK’ Dr Ffion Jones**



*Ffion Jones is an artist and a farmer, living and working in the Talybont area where she keeps a flock of Welsh Mountain Sheep and Hereford Cows. Her artistic practice often explores farming identity and culture as she seeks to express the complexities of the farming way of life.*

Ffion discussed her new work commissioned for Ceredigion Museum, developed while engaging with the Museum’s agricultural collection and also the sheep farming community of Ceredigion.

This presentation explored how my own role and perspectives as a farmer and farmer’s daughter play an integral part in the conversations I have with participating members of the agricultural community. While reflecting on a key moment of realisation during the Foot and Mouth Outbreak of 2001, when I was sixteen, I discussed how the events of that period captured the complex interconnections between my family and the flock of Welsh Mountain Sheep. I explained how the human-sheep relationship has become one of the key areas of my research and artistic practice. The presentation discussed ideas of reciprocity between livestock animals and human beings – how as farmers, we experience the world and navigate our way through time, space and place through the nature of the relationship with our sheep. Sheep then, become intrinsic to my understanding of myself in the world. I discussed artistic process and conceptual design by summarising some of my previous work around the human-sheep connection before exploring my own approach to the commissioned work for

Ceredigion Museum. I acknowledge a need as an artist to ‘plethu’ (weave) the complexities of farm life into the fabric of my own artistic practice and process.

I discussed the challenge of working with installation, rather than expanded film or live performance and discuss how the agricultural tools and wool processing tools that are held by the museum had influenced my early ideas during the process.

I explored how instead of creating a piece of work that put sheep on display, I sought to capture the sheep through the human experience of working with them on a daily basis. The offer to the viewer is to look into the eyes of the farmer, and to connect food production, and land-management to ‘real’ faces and voices in the world. I suggest that the work explores attempts to give space to farmers to reflect on the nature of their own relationship with their sheep. The invitation to them was also to reflect on the challenges of the future, the areas where struggle may be encountered, or new opportunities might be suggested. The presentation acknowledged the invaluable contribution of my farming participants who were of different ages, gender and from different areas in Ceredigion. In the presentation, I also suggested the kinds of experiences that might be had by an audience encountering the work as well as offering some sense of the way that the work functions within its installation setting.

I conclude the presentation by reiterating the importance of the flock and the land to those who farm, and how consideration of the complexity of feeling is needed when working within such communities.



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## 6b. ART IN THE FARMING LANDSCAPE WHAT CAN ARTISTS OFFER TO THE CONVERSATION?

### 'THIEVES AGAIN: SKETCHES FROM THE BLACK MOUNTAINS'

**Sion Marshall Waters**

[sionmarshallwaters.com](http://sionmarshallwaters.com)

*Siôn Marshall-Waters is a documentary filmmaker and photographer based in the south of Wales. A recent graduate from the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology at the University of Manchester, his projects explore people's relationship with place, how notions of place are constructed and experienced, and how they shape one's sense of self.*

Sion's talk discussed his non-narrative film making or 'Visual Anthropology', developing work in the Black Mountains and connecting with individuals by attending a small church outside Abergavenny.

At the 'Future Landscapes' symposium I presented photography and film extracts from my Arts Council of Wales Research and Development project, *Thieves Again*. The project pieces together a portrait of rural identity and belonging in the Black Mountains, south Wales.

I discussed my practice in relation to visual anthropology and non-narrative film-making, outlining how art, film, and photography can provide insights into communities and uncover various aspects to social and cultural identities and experiences.

I discussed briefly the importance of representation and evocation of culture within rural contexts, citing Raymond Williams' *Country and the City* as being an influence on my work. The relevance of this was to highlight that while traditional representations of the countryside have romanticised the rural as a pastoral garden of Eden, it is also important to recognise that there are also communities left behind and challenged by modern globalisation and Capitalism. This has provided a starting point for my work which has aimed to give voice to those communities, but also a focus on the mundane and ordinary aspects of rural living.

The film extracts shown were: a story about a shed, and a vignette about my conversations with a farmer. The works subsequently highlight the subtle tension between decline and transition of rural identity.



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## 6c. ART IN THE FARMING LANDSCAPE WHAT CAN ARTISTS OFFER TO THE CONVERSATION?



**Alicia Miller** farms *Troed y Rhiw Organics*, an organic horticulture farm in the west of Wales, with her partner Nathan Richards. In addition, she is the web editor at the Sustainable Food Trust and writes regularly on sustainable food issues. She understands sustainable food from the hands-on perspective of growing food on a small family-run farm. Previously, she spent many years as a curator and gallery educator in the contemporary visual arts.

I want to start by introducing myself, while I worked for many years in the contemporary visual arts, 10 years ago, my husband and I bought a 23-acre farm near New Quay. We did not come from a farming background, and it is perhaps the last thing that I ever thought I would become. That said, I think it one of the most important things to be doing at this moment, farming on small-scale, in environmentally sound and sustainable ways, feeding a local community and caring carefully and conscientiously for a small plot of land and everything that lives on it. Faced not only with climate change, but also with the catastrophic decline of the planet's biodiversity and the profound pollution of seas, we must begin to do things differently. We must mend the rupture in our relationship with the Earth that led us to see ourselves as an other, one with dominion, one that is rapacious in its consumption of the Earth's resources, one to whom carelessness does not matter.

The question of 'What artists can offer' in the conversations on farming and landscape may seem, in one respect, an overly obvious one. Artists have had an intense and enduring relationship with the land and the creatures that inhabit it, that stretches back, arguably, across millennia.

They have been remaking the land, quite literally, in an exercise that reflects an elemental need to understand what our relationship to it is. 'Landscape' as an artist's genre has long been used to demarcate our own identity in response to land. In Britain, this is particularly acute. For Blake, England's 'green and pleasant land' is humanity's saviour, and Constable might be perceived as painting this in a way that defines British identity as somehow embedded in a land cultivated and shaped through agriculture, its wildness almost lost. But for him, as for Turner, the weather is a capricious, potent and implicitly dangerous force. Turner's painting, *Stonehenge, Wiltshire*, is a vision of catastrophic collapse, as a shepherd and his sheep are caught in a storm, seemingly struggling for their survival. For farmers, weather is a constant pre-occupation. It often has devastating consequences for them; who can forget 2013's late spring storm that brought heavy snow to uplands in Wales that killed livestock in huge numbers, and this past summer's drought which saw much livestock killed prematurely. For farmers, the weather is an intractable reminder of the precariousness of their profession. Does this tie them tighter to the planet?

Agriculture, Yuval Noah Harari argues in his book *Sapiens*, is a scourge upon the Earth wrought by humanity. When humans figured out how to till the soil and husband animals, they opened the door to brutal physical labour and diseases that come with living closely to animals. He argues that the quality of life was better as a hunter-gatherer, there was more leisure time and diets were varied and ultimately, healthier. But by tethering ourselves to the land we have created 'civilisation' – something, one could argue, that is anything but civil.



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## 6c. ART IN THE FARMING LANDSCAPE WHAT CAN ARTISTS OFFER TO THE CONVERSATION?



This has forever separated us from the wider ecosystem of the planet; we live on it like a scourge, agriculture has a dark heart. Its impact on the animals that are subjected to it has been largely cruel, and we have devastated the soil on which we grow our food: 60% of global soils have been degraded by unsustainable farming practices during the previous 70 years.

As I think about the work in the exhibition 'Sheep', I can see the ongoing negotiation around the question of how to bridge the gap between the self and the natural world, a gap that ultimately shouldn't be there. Creativity becomes the avenue of transference, a way of finding, mapping, melding, crossing, being and opening onto landscape that becomes integral and whole.

For Wales, arguably a nation of farmers, sheep are an iconic species. They are at the centre of a particularly current discussion about the survival of upland farming and the environmental impact of sheep on this sensitive land and the desire of some to 'rewild' the uplands (George Monbiot being the most vocal proponent). I don't want to open this argument here, but just want to say that in my own opinion, it is too late to turn back the clock.

Eating is an unavoidably barbaric act – this cannot be escaped, especially with the expanding research on plant sentience. Veganism will not save us, nor the planet. What is necessary is for us to weave ourselves back into the land, becoming again an integral part of the planet and the species we inhabit it with. We can learn from our past mistakes, we can live differently.



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## 6d. ART IN THE FARMING LANDSCAPE WHAT CAN ARTISTS OFFER TO THE CONVERSATION?

### CROSSED PATHS

Miranda Whall - [www.mirandawhall.space/](http://www.mirandawhall.space/)

*Miranda is an artist based in Aberystwyth, Wales, UK. She is course director of the BA Creative Arts and full-time lecturer at Aberystwyth University. Whall has recently completed the first part of a trilogy titled Crossed Paths. The Welsh component of the project was funded by the Arts Council of Wales. The interdisciplinary project was developed with Pwllpeiran Upland Research Centre, IBERS, Aberystwyth University and Oriel Davies Gallery, Newtown, Wales. Whall is currently working on the second part of the trilogy in Scotland with Iliyana Nedkova and Horescross Arts, Perth, Scotland and Professor Martin Price, director of the Mountain Research Centre, University of Highlands and Islands. The three projects will bring together film, performance and the body in motion, mountain and upland ecology; each project telling a story of a mountain from a different human/animal perspective.*

During the summer and autumn of 2017 artist Miranda Whall crawled 5.5 miles through the Cambrian Mountains, West Wales wearing a sheep fleece and 14 GoPro cameras. The resulting multi-screen film and audio installation, exhibition, documentary film and publication shown at the Oriel Davies Gallery told the compelling story of a mountain where the narrative was told from the legs, arms, hands, head, back, stomach and mouth of a human (or an imagined sheep), thereby highlighting that each have shaped the landscape we see today and both have a role to play in shaping its future. It is hoped that the presentation of a de-centred and enactive perspective will enable and contribute to a discussion on this particular mountain and a wider discussion on mountain ecosystems, environment

and culture. Whall commissioned eight local musicians: Harriet Earis, Tim Noble, Angharad Davies, Toby Hay, Ric Lloyd, Jasper Salmon, Diarmuid Johnson and Sam Christie to compose new compositions for the project. Writer Phil Smith, poet Zoë Skoulding, photographer Hannah Mann and filmmaker Rhys Thwaites-Jones were also all central collaborators on the project.

Whall began her crawl in the peat and heather moorlands high up on Pen y Garn (610m), moved down through the acid grasslands and peaty Molinia/rush bogs, the improved pastures and managed farmlands to finally reach the Pwllpeiran Upland Research Centre in Cwmystwyth. As a kind of sheep/human drone she attempted to document, experience and understand the mountain, its inhabitants and its matter, in relation to her body, moving in an altered state through the landscape.

Whall's process follows in the footsteps of artists walking practices, such as her father Dick Whall, Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Francis Alys, Simon Faithful, Phil Smith among others. It also relates to the social and scientific experiments of Sacha Dench who became a human swan, Thomas Thwaites who lived as a goat with prosthetics and a simulated goat's stomach, and Charles Foster, author of *Being a Beast* (2016) who lived periodically over six years as a badger, red deer, fox and swift.

*Crossed Paths* is a trilogy project, funding has been applied for part two 'Crossed paths - Scotland' to be created in the Cairngorms, Scotland and shown in Perth Concert Hall and Perth Theatre in March 2020.



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## 7. FUTURE PROPOSALS: DIANA REYNOLDS, WELSH GOVERNMENT



The afternoon session was left open for a world café style series of discussions around different topics. These were led by Arfon Williams, Michael Woods, Rhodri Lloyd Williams, Nick Fenwick and David Bavin. This session provided an important opportunity for our audience to participate in the discussion around the future of our landscape. The session was developed with the idea of allowing representatives from different perspectives of the Welsh uplands i.e. farming, conservation, community, policy etc. to open up a dialogue that everyone could participate in. Ceredigion Museum worked with **Diana Reynolds, the Welsh Government's sustainable development change manager** to hold this session in an inclusive way. This is some of what we heard.

1. We want agri-environment schemes that help us to integrate outcomes for food, biodiversity, water, carbon and the development of new technologies, businesses and (circular economy) products. This could be an upgrade to our old ideas of diversification – creating zero carbon farms that combine the latest technology with traditional understanding and historical knowledge and (individually or in clusters) producing a balanced human diet as well as outcomes for nature.

2. We want agri-environment schemes to be based on relationships and local collaboration not generic prescriptions (which have often failed to adapt to specific places or to drive integrated solutions). Key priorities for the new schemes should include: recreating hay meadows, moorland grazing to maximise biodiversity, trees in appropriate places, increasing horticulture and mixed farming, using the whole (meat or veg etc.) product in a variety of ways ('waste not want not') e.g. meat, wool, offal

from sheep and developing local currencies, creating energy as well as food.

3. Government has a responsibility to remove barriers to developing local currencies. In the past we have failed to do this. There is a long tradition of local currencies e.g. Banc Dafad Ddu. Do we have a human right to this?

4. We need to respect farmers in the way we respect doctors. We need to respect wildlife and remember how closely and supportively farmers used to live with nature together e.g. we used to protect lapwings' nests by carefully staking out areas before cutting crops, in return we could eat some of their eggs instead of starving up on the hill. Now there are nowhere near the previous numbers of birds and every egg needs protecting so that it can become a chick.

5. We need to accept that we are in a state of emergency (note WG and Assembly climate declarations) and that food is a necessity. We need to get young people involved in farming and growing and aim for food sovereignty for Wales – control over production, processing and distribution – connecting communities to markets, seeing farming as an important skill in an occupation, moving ourselves onto a zero carbon footing (so that there is less room to argue about methane).

Summary: could we invent a new sort of farming in Wales? Call it restorative or assemblage farming – all sorts of sizes of farms but all diverse within themselves as well as between each other. This could be the perfect combined emergency response, skills development and job opportunity scheme.



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# 7. FUTURE PROPOSALS

## WHAT DO FARMERS NEED NOW?

Arfon Williams, Land Use Manager [RSPB Cymru](#)

Arfon has been directly involved with Welsh agri-environment climate (RDP) schemes for over twenty years. A recent notable achievement was his participation in the independent review of Glastir Advanced which made recommendations to the Government.

In his capacity as land use manager for RSPB Cymru he was fully engaged in the recent reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). His aim, along with UK colleagues and EU Birdlife partners was to progress the CAP towards a policy that drives and maintains sustainable land use. Arfon currently sits on the Wales Rural Network Steering group, and is interested in what farmers need now?

*'Upland farming in Wales is struggling, and if these farms are to survive we must look to longer-term solutions. The uplands of Wales are some of our most wildlife rich and environmentally valuable areas so it is vitally important we are able to sustain land managers in these areas in the future. These farms are in a prime position to provide a range of public goods and services such as reducing flood risk, storing greenhouse gases and providing homes for wildlife. And yet, unlike food, there are currently no markets for these important services. As such it makes perfect sense to use schemes like Glastir to pay farmers for them while markets are developed.'*

*Farming and the environment are inextricably linked, and in the uplands that relationship has been viewed by many as distinctly negative with adopted definitions including less favoured and*

*severely disadvantaged areas. If upland farming is to have a viable future, re-evaluating how the environment is perceived and managed is key, challenges must be seen as opportunities and farmers must be encouraged and supported to take on the critically important role of sustainable land managers.'*

[\(The future of upland farming - Guest Blog by Arfon Williams\)](#)

The feedback from the group session drew up three main themes:

### Collaboration

Working with farmers, working together and developing solutions with them and not imposed upon them with mutual respect.

*'Working with farmers rather than telling them what to do.'*

### Policy

Long-term planning in policy making, basic income for farmers, investment in the rural economy.

*'Outcome based policies not directives.'*

*'Long-term funding.'*

*'Basic farm income as foundation for rural economy.'*

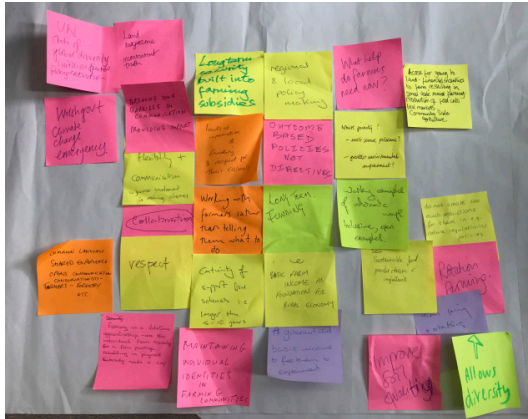
### Farming practices

Improving soil quality, using rotational farming systems, building diversity and sustainable food production.

*'Rotation farming allows diversity.'*

*'Sustainable food production.'*

*'Maintaining individual identities in farming communities.'*



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## 7. FUTURE PROPOSALS

### WOULD PEOPLE BE WILLING TO PLANT TREES ON 100 ACRES OF WELSH FARMLAND IF IT MEANT CUTTING DOWN 100 ACRES OF PRISTINE AMAZON RAINFOREST IN BRAZIL?

Rhodri Lloyd Williams, [Moelgolomen farm](#), Talybont.

Here at Moelgolomen we have always looked to farm in a sustainable way creating not only an environment where livestock can thrive but also one that is sympathetic to the environment. This is why we've been an organic farm since 1999 and why we've always been involved one way or another in environmental schemes.

We've also planted tens of thousands of trees in the last 20 years. We planted some in our area of ancient oak woodland, including scots pine, hazel, willow, sweet chestnut, holly, cherry and a number of other native tree species. Since we've fenced the area off we've seen other trees self-seed such as ash, rowan, beech and birch, to leave a rich and varied woodland teeming with life.

In addition to the woodland we've also planted a few miles of hedgerows around fields after double fencing areas to keep the livestock out. We now have these wildlife corridors linking large areas of the farm allowing animals to travel long distances without having to venture from the sanctuary of the hedge lines.

In 2012 our hydro scheme came online which means for large periods of the winter (and more often than not most

of the summer too) the farmhouse and all the sheds were powered by electricity generated on site. As we feel strongly about renewable technology we have subsequently switched our energy suppliers to a renewable energy company, therefore even when we are enjoying a dry spell our carbon footprint is minimal.

#### Question to the audience

We currently import 40% of our food and I recently heard at a presentation that 70% of EU food imports come from Brazil. With this being the case and with the push from certain quarters to take some agricultural land out of production to make room for wildlife would people be willing to plant trees on 100 acres of Welsh farmland if this means cutting down 100 acres of pristine Amazon rainforest in Brazil? Our food has to come from somewhere and unknowingly this could be the choice we are making. By reducing production in our own country are we just exporting the problem – and perhaps our consciences – abroad?

#### Feedback:

Most of the feedback veered a bit off topic although most people seemed fairly adamant we should be growing our own food where possible instead of importing it from further afield with some feeling very strongly about locally-grown foods. Important themes around funding and policy, rural deprivation and helping local people to build homes or 'rehabilitate ruins' came out, alongside supporting renewable energy and somewhat controversially 'restricting incomers'.



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## 7. FUTURE PROPOSALS

**IS IT APPROPRIATE THAT THE £3.4 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR THE SUMMIT TO SEA PROJECT COMES FROM A TRUST SET UP BY THOSE WHO ARE ALSO DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN AND/OR FOUNDERS OF THE INGLEBY COMPANY? THE COMPANY FARMS SHEEP ON A VAST SCALE ON LAND IN NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA THAT WAS UNTIL VERY RECENTLY UNTOUCHED WILDERNESS, BUT NOW PRODUCES 61,000 LAMBS A YEAR?**

**Dr. Nick Fenwick, [Farmers Union Wales](#)**

*Nick Fenwick studied chemistry and computational chemistry at Bangor University before returning to Montgomeryshire in 1999 to complete a PhD in Theoretical and Computational Statistical Chemistry.*

Nick explained that he grew up on a hill farm near Talerddig in Montgomeryshire which has a near identical ecosystem and form of agriculture to the Cambrian Mountains. On the farm where he grew up, 1,000 sheep were grazed on open mountain in the 1930s and stocking rates were relatively constant until the '90s. In his youth in the '70s, there was an abundance of trout in the hill streams and rivers, curlews, golden plover, black grouse, grouse and similar species. In the mid '70s, thousands of acres of woodland were planted around the farm and environmental rules since the '90s prescribed a reduction in the number of grazing animals to

about a third of what it was a century ago. Bird and fish numbers have since plummeted; there are no longer any fish in the rivers, few curlews and no grouse.

He associates this with afforestation and a reduction in grazing livestock. He highlighted figures that show upland sheep grazing rates on vast areas of land to have fluctuated, but are now lower than they were more than a hundred years ago.

He also highlighted that tithe records and archaeological evidence shows that agricultural activity in the uplands of Wales has been significant for around 5,000 years, and believes that the most significant change to land use since the 1950s has been the replacement of arable crops such as oats in upland and lowland fields with grazing for sheep and cattle.

As such, he argued that while overgrazing was a problem in some areas for a period where subsidies encouraged sheep production, the focus on a stereotypical association between sheep and mountain grazing has led to a knee-jerk emphasis on reducing hill and mountain grazing in a way which has led to habitat and biodiversity destruction.

He also highlighted National Office for Statistics figures which showed that in large areas of Wales, including in the Cambrian Mountains, a quarter or more of people were employed in agriculture. The impact of measures that reduce agricultural activity would be devastating economically, socially and culturally, not least given that Welsh speakers make up 61% of all Celtic language speakers (despite the fact that Wales's population comprises



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less than 20% of the population of all Celtic countries and communities). Throughout Wales agriculture is the employment category with the highest proportion of Welsh speakers at almost twice the national average (75% of FUW members speak Welsh in the household).

Nick emphasised his appreciation of why creating a Welsh version of the wildernesses seen in places like the uplands of the Pyrenees through ‘rewilding’ is attractive. However, he believed that plans to replace existing ecosystems and economies with ‘rewilding’ ideas discounted the fact that existing Welsh ecosystems, species and culture had developed alongside 5,000 years of agriculture. Added to this is that ‘rewilding’ equated to the replacement of these based on an arrogant colonial-type assumption that Wales was a ‘virgin territory’ where others have the right to enact their dreams irrespective of indigenous people or established species and ecosystems.

Given that the north Cambrian Mountains area has been earmarked as Rewilding Britain’s flagship rewilding area, in the form of the “Summit to Sea” project, Nick asked those present whether they felt it was appropriate that the £3.4 million in funding for the project comes from a trust set-up by those who are also directly involved in and/or founders of the Ingleby Company, which farms sheep on a vast scale on land in New Zealand and Australia that was until very recently untouched wilderness but now produces 61,000 lambs a year?

### Feedback:

There are two issues which were somewhat conflated in the question itself, and a third issue was raised in the course of the presentation. It would have been better if the three issues were discussed individually. One of the issues would have been enough in the time available.

Firstly, was the land in the Cambrian Mountains managed appropriately in the recent past compared with a more distant past? Who was responsible for the management at these times?

Secondly, if only some versions of ‘rewilding’ are good, what are those?

Thirdly, there is the question of availability and suitability of funding sources. Are there inappropriate sources of funding? What makes a source of funding inappropriate and what can be done about it? Is there sufficient local engagement and control of outcomes?

More details, actual evidence and references would have benefitted the question.

The strongest part of the question is the emphasis given to Welsh-speaking communities and their relationship with agriculture. This is an essential point and a vital consideration for long-term ecological (and cultural) conservation in Wales. However, the question as a whole comes across as reactionary, despite some lip service given to ‘rewilding’ in the Pyrenees. The Endangered Landscapes Programme may be funded by Arcadia but at least it is managed by the



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Cambridge Conservation Initiative who are represented by well-regarded ecologists and conservationists.

It might be better to embrace further the need for sustainability, along with the integration of farming and conservation. Funding and collaborative support for Welsh farming communities must be available to support conservation, promote biodiversity in order to mitigate against climate change. Equally there is no doubt that the insights and experiences of traditional farming and shepherding have much to offer and must be absorbed along with the needs of the communities represented by these activities. Undoubtedly more should be done to support and sustain communities during times of change, and a call for co-operation and understanding needs to be directed at conservationists too.

Jeremy Leighton (symposium participant)

### Response from Summit to Sea

The Summit to Sea project is an initiative that aims to restore flourishing ecosystems and a resilient local economy at a landscape scale. It's an opportunity for Wales to lead the way in finding new options for people and nature.

It isn't about taking things back to a time before human influence. Rural economies are complex and - in this part of Wales - are a stronghold for the Welsh language which remains spoken by a high percentage of the farming community, and within local villages and towns. Farming traditions in Wales have shaped the landscape we see today. Place names are interwoven in the histories of their use over hundreds of generations and this heritage and culture are essential to preserve for local communities as well as part of a broader Welsh history.

The project is hoping to support landowners in developing adaptations in land management which create stronger more resilient ecosystems, but which go hand-in-hand with farming, ensuring the resilience of this industry too.

The project will be supporting ecological restoration as an option and an opportunity to create both more resilient ecosystems and farming models. Many farmers will choose to continue managing the land as they have always done. Others may decide to undertake habitat restoration on parts of their land, for example by creating a new woodland or peat bog restoration. Some may decide to undertake a more comprehensive review of how they manage their land in the future. Summit to Sea aims to provide additional and alternative options to enable people to stay on their land



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in the difficult times ahead. But it will always be an optional project.

There are other landscape-scale restoration projects in the UK and across the world, however, this project is unique in working with a landscape and seascape which has, and continues, to be farmed and fished today. The project hopes that by working to support existing projects, and join these with new projects, along with supporting farmers, we will see a landscape which supports people as much as it does the ecosystem and wildlife. Together we have the opportunity to demonstrate an exemplar of a rural economy which supports the people, language and culture alongside the urgent need to create better opportunities for wildlife and carbon sequestration as we face the challenges of Brexit and the climate emergency together.

In response to Dr Fenwick's direct point of the funding source. The Arcadia Fund funds the Endangered Landscape Programme, of which this project is a recipient, is a fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin. Lisbet Rausing is also a Director of Ingleby Farms & Forestry. Ingleby Farms & Forests plays no part in the decisions of Arcadia. The governance structures of Arcadia and Ingleby farms are separate and different. Ingleby is a self-governing company, run completely independently from Arcadia. Arcadia, as a charity must act for public benefit. There is therefore no link between the company and any of the initiatives funded by Arcadia, including projects supported by the Endangered Landscapes Programme.

Projects that are being funded by the ELP were selected based on a two-stage process, in which applications were

evaluated against the programme's published criteria. Each project was reviewed and scored independently by members of the Oversight and Selection Panel, a group of eight international experts with experience of landscape restoration and biodiversity conservation in Europe. Arcadia has one representative on this Panel. The Summit to Sea project is one of eight projects that was selected through this process in 2018.

The project encourages those who wish to know more to contact the project team. The project is managed by a partnership which is always looking for new partners, particularly those involved in agricultural land management.



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## 7. FUTURE PROPOSALS

### WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT CAN BE DONE WITH PUBLIC FUNDS TO SUPPORT THE SUSTAINABILITY AND LIVEABILITY OF THE WELSH UPLANDS?

Michael Woods, (Global-Rural project, [DGES](#))

*The Global Countryside: Rural Change and Development in Globalization ([GLOBAL-RURAL](#))' is a major research project funded by the European Research Council. The study aims to advance our understanding of the workings and impact of globalization in rural regions through the development and application of new conceptual and methodological approaches.*

'Wales has been a net beneficiary of funding from the EU and is unlikely to gain significant advantage from any "Brexit dividend". The fiscal model adopted by the UK for distributing any funding repatriated from the EU between the devolved governments will be critical in determining whether the Welsh Government receives the equivalent of current levels of funding from the EU, or whether there is an increase or decrease in real terms. Furthermore, decisions about whether to replace current EU funding programmes will be made in the context of several years of austerity policies that have reduced the overall Welsh Government budget and resulted in funding cuts in areas such as education and social services, including rural communities. EU membership has, in effect, ring-fenced funding in areas such as agriculture and rural development, protecting them from the effect of austerity.

'However, post-Brexit, the allocation of funding to these sectors will come under greater scrutiny, with likely political pressure to direct more funding to public services, especially health. Given the distribution of the population of Wales and hence demand on public services, any such redirection of funding would probably have the effect of reducing public spending in rural Wales relative to urban districts.'

*([Rural Policy after Brexit Wales, p.12](#))*

### Feedback

Comments from participants focussed on improvements to rural services, lack of affordable housing – particularly for future farmers – adjustments to policy to change the subsidy system, and modifications to the way that the land is managed, particularly in relation to scale of farming.

'Affordable housing.'

'Cap subsidies so it doesn't go to the large farms.'

'Target subsidies at small farmers.'

'Infrastructure for home-working i.e. broadband, also power neutral.'

'Bus services, connectivity.'

'Subsidise ecologically friendly farming.'

'Subsidising agricultural diversity.'

'Diversification of livestock, crops and farming types.'

'Rethinking forestry and forest products industry.'

'Give to rural residents to spend locally.'



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## 8. SUMMING UP

### Professor Michael Woods Aberystwyth University

The symposium started on Thursday morning high on the summit of Pen-y-Garn. As the small group of us huddled around the cairn, peering into an obscuring grey mist, out of which brief glimpses of wind turbines, forest and heath would momentarily materialise. Bracing against the onslaught of inclement weather, we were somewhat aware that we were acting out the perfect metaphor for current debates around the Welsh uplands.

As we heard on the field visit, the Cambrian Mountains and the other uplands of Wales have encountered many changes during their long history. For centuries they have been a landscape worked and modified by people, and for centuries they have been tied into networks and chains that have spread out from Wales across Europe and the world. Nonetheless, the next few years could prove to be a particularly historically pivotal period. The questions about the future of the uplands come from at least two directions. Growing awareness of the climate crisis is prompting a rethink of how we use our land, which involves difficult issues around the sustainability of livestock farming and visions for a new uplands economy based on the provision of ecosystem services, or for a managed retreat of farming in 'rewilding' experiments. At the same time, the continuity of the traditional model of the upland family farm has been enmeshed in uncertainty by Britain's impending departure from the European Union and debates over the shape of post-Brexit agricultural policy, which could involve the end of payments that have kept many hill farms solvent.

Negotiating the precarious future of the uplands will require conversations between the many different groups with interests in the region: farmers, residents, conservationists, recreationists and others. The second day of the symposium – and more informally the first – initiated this dialogue, with stimulating contributions from panellists and intense discussion in break-out groups beginning to sketch out ideas and possible convergences. The need for an inclusive approach is recognised in some of the post-it notes that participants have written in response to the question of 'what is the future of the uplands', including 'A wider community can access it, interpret it, present it, affect it, use it, benefit from it and decide – make decisions about it'.

Clearly the Welsh uplands are a complex place, and it may help to think about them as an 'assemblage' of many diverse components, held together in a temporary arrangement, but constantly changing and interconnected with the rest of the world. Thinking about possible futures for the upland means thinking about how different components fit together, which are most valued, and how much change is acceptable. Once again, the hybrid and multifarious character of the uplands was reflected on post-it notes that called for 'More diversity – of work, of habitats, of wildlife, of activity, of livelihoods, of production'. Another post-it note emphasised the connectivity of the uplands by imagining, 'an area with a strong sense of place – an affinity with the past and the confidence to change and develop a positive place with positive aspirations and an understanding of our place within national and global contexts'.



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## 8. SUMMING UP



In social science, the concept of an assemblage also implies that the components have a mix of material and expressive roles. The material components of the uplands perform a variety of utilitarian roles, from providing meat and wool to carbon sequestration and water purification.

But these material contributions do not fully capture the essence of the uplands. They are also replete with expressive and emotive meanings, as planners who have attempted to consider windfarm developments as a purely technical issue have discovered, or as the passions on either side of current debates around rewilding testify.

It is here, perhaps, that art has a particular contribution to make to discussions around the future of the uplands. Artists are part of the uplands community, but they also bring a capacity to capture and represent the realities and possibilities of the landscape in ways that deepen and challenge our perspectives. Several of the exhibits in the Ceredigion Museum exhibition 'Sheep' that accompanies this symposium demonstrate this potential. Ffion Jones's film *We are the Flock* and Short and Forward's film *Dick and Mary* both powerfully convey something of sheep farming as an expressive part of the uplands as we know them, and in a way in which identity is shaped around everyday practices of keeping sheep. Miranda Whall's

installation 'Crossed Paths', following sheep tracks down Pen-y-Garn from the viewpoint of a sheep, compels us to consider the non-human members of the upland assemblage and their interests.

Art can also help to encourage and stimulate discussion from diverse participants, can challenge orthodoxies, and visualise options for the future. As the symposium has demonstrated, peering through the fog of current politics and finding clarity about the future of the Welsh uplands that respects and upholds the interests of all those who live, work and enjoy the region will necessarily require the combined efforts of farmers, conservationists, social and natural scientists and artists, building on the dialogue started here.



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## 9. FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS:

65 people attended the event over two days of talks, What we could do better discussions, walks and film screenings.

Thanks to everyone who filled in the evaluation forms which helps us to work out what we did well and what we can do better.

### What people found most useful about the event:

Attendants really appreciated the diversity of the participants and presentations and the wide representation of voices within the landscape and rural communities.

*'The diversity of people that attended.'*

*'The positivity and inclusiveness, support from all corners.'*

*'The fantastic discussions between many different viewpoints.'*

*'An opportunity to discuss locally the matters that will affect us the most'.*

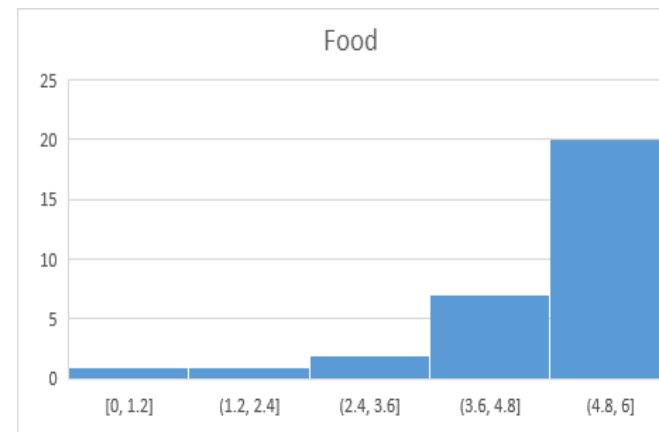
*'Energy and enthusiasm.'*

*'Different opinions, engagement with farmers.'*

*'Well-organised, interwoven themes and perspectives.'*

### What could we have done better?

Reviewed the technology/sound available on the day. The sound system on the second day wasn't up to standard to showcase the films.



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## 10. USEFUL LINKS

[brexit-and-our-land-consultation-document](#)

There is now another consultation period with new proposals, open until 19 Oct, 2019

<https://gov.wales/revised-proposals-supporting-welsh-farmers-after-brexit>

FUW:

Cynefin Study

Farming in Wales and the Welsh Language

<https://www.fuw.org.uk/policy/policy-reports>

Wales and rural poverty (public policy institute for Wales)  
<http://ppiw.org.uk/files/2016/06/An-introduction-to-Rural-Poverty.pdf>

Arfon Williams

<https://community.rspb.org.uk/getinvolved/wales/b/wales-blog/posts/arfon-williams-rspb-countryside-manager-on-taking-action-for-a-countryside-rich-in-wildlife>

[Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee The future of land management in Wales](#)

<https://landscaperesearch.org/>

<https://inourhands.film/>

Aberystwyth University

<https://globalruralproject.wordpress.com/>



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## 11. WITH THANKS TO



Thanks to all the contributors and supporters of the symposium, particularly partners from Aberystwyth University and the Elan Valley Trust.

Thanks to Felix Cannadam for the documentary photography and Pete Telfer Culture Colony for filming the presentations.

The 'Future Landscapes' symposium is funded by Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund, an initiative created by the Garfield Weston Foundation and Art Fund.

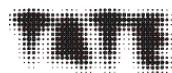
The symposium is being run in conjunction with 'SHEEP' an art exhibition exploring interpretations of sheep, farming and dialogues around the future of our rural landscape - at Ceredigion Museum until 29th June.

SHEEP is also grateful for funding from the Arts Council of Wales and The Ferryman Project: Sharing Works of Art is part of the part of The Ferryman Partnership Programme inspired by the recent acquisition of William Stott of Oldham's *Le Passeur* (The Ferryman) 1881 for Tate's National Collection of British Art. It is supported by National Lottery players through the National Lottery Heritage.

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