# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE** | **Wales Rural Development Programme 2014 -2020- Maximising European Rural Development Funds** |
| **DATE** | **17 January 2024** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales & Trefnydd** |

I am pleased to report to Members of the Senedd all the available funding through the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020 for Wales, more than £846 million, of which over £564 million was European Union (EU) funds, has been spent within the programme period, subject to the submission of final accounts and any subsequent adjustments by the European Commission.

For decades, Wales has benefited from support through the EU’s RDP. With the UK’s exit from the EU, this support ceased on December 31, 2023 and the Government will now focus on the implementation of a truly Welsh approach to supporting our rural economy.

The RDP has funded thousands of projects nationwide, delivering countless benefits to people, businesses and Wales, its key strength being to support and foster innovative solutions to the challenges we face. The overall success of this joint-working programme with the EU and its positive impact on Wales, which has been extensive, diverse and successful, will be felt and seen for decades to come.

For example, during the most recent programme period (2014-2020), more than £409 million was made available to farmers, land managers and foresters to improve biodiversity and help tackle climate change through the Glastir agri-environment schemes. This has helped to restore over 300,000 hectares of our most precious habitats to capture carbon, improve water quality and support rare biodiversity.

We also invested £45million in modernising the farming and forestry industries to increase their resilience and competitiveness, while enhancing the productivity of our rural workforce overall, with over 4,000 jobs created and safeguarded through the RDP. We supported the creation and growth of the Welsh food industry, supporting local supply chains and food businesses. The flagship Helix project has created 114 full time jobs and safeguarded 472 jobs. We also invested in rural communities across Wales to foster innovation, improve transport and support tourism, among many other things.

My officials and Beneficiaries have worked hard to achieve this outcome and I am grateful to them all for their considerable efforts. It is important to recognise that delivering full spend of the Programme has been achieved against a backdrop of unprecedented challenges for farmers and rural communities. The ongoing impacts of our exit from the European Union, the Covid 19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis continue to have a significant impact on people and businesses in Wales today.

I also want to thank our partners in the European Commission and acknowledge their unwavering support throughout the lifespan of this programme since it began under the Common Agriculture Policy in the early 1990s. Despite our exit from the EU and the end of our involvement with the RDP, I look forward to continuing to work closely with our European partners in the future.

I committed to delivering full spend of the RDP and this has been achieved. As we move to implementing our wholly domestic support for farmers and rural communities, we will work to ensure we learn lessons from the successes achieved from the RDP for the future benefit of Wales.