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Date: 17th August 2020

Dear Wrexham Borough Council,

RE: P/2020/0363 planning application

I am writing to you on behalf of NFU Cymru to express our support of planning application P/2020/0363, Five Fords, Wrexham - hub for future low carbon fresh food production.

The plan to construct a state-of-the-art greenhouse on land which lies to the east of the Five Fords Waste-Water Treatment Works is an exciting opportunity for the Horticulture sector in Wales to develop, with the potential to become a nationally significant piece of infrastructure with a significant contribution to the economy of Wales beyond Brexit.

The land chosen is in a unique position with opportunities to link in with Welsh Water and neighbouring Anaerobic Digester Plants while simultaneously having good network links across the region with access to skilled labour from the nearby town of Wrexham.

The greenhouse will grow high wire crops, likely to be speciality tomatoes, and will employ the latest high-tech growing methods and innovation, whilst also employing 150 people. The proposal to heat the greenhouse using waste heat from the Waste-Water Treatment Works and to use carbon dioxide from the works (currently vented into the atmosphere), piped into the greenhouse to help the plants grow is a blue print of what can be done at a number of sites across Wales in some of the old industrial heartlands which will regenerate economies in those areas creating jobs and wealth.

The output from the site will also contribute to the local economy, generating an impressive 29 kg/m² of cherry plum tomatoes or 200 cucumbers/m², equating to over 4,000 tonnes of tomatoes or 30 million cucumbers. To achieve these yields while at the same time sequestering 4,500t of CO₂ is not only impressive but should be a celebrated achievement.

The project has sought to develop local partnerships with land-based higher education universities and colleges looking to enhance their local offering to increase the opportunities in horticultural, agronomy and agri-tech industries. The potential for a long-term partnership could see Wrexham as being the hub for horticulture type training for the whole of Wales thus attracting further investments in the Colleges involved like Coleg Cambria.

The Welsh Government views horticulture businesses as an area to expand within Wales and is working with producers towards a sustainable horticultural industry that helps to service a range of economic, environmental, and social needs. This project certainly meets all the requirements Welsh Government has set out in their Strategic Action Plan focusing on key issues like sustainable development, training, improving business performance and efficiency, and constantly enhancing the quality and reputation of Welsh produce. The scale of the project will also look to improve the efficiency of the supply chains ensuring a sustainable production of fruit and vegetables in Wales.

More recently, the COVID19 pandemic has highlighted the fragility of our national food supply chains and to also highlight that it is a matter of strategic national interest to ensure that our country can feed itself and maintain a high level of domestic production in a volatile world is critical aspect of food security. Local communities have also been exposed to the importance of food miles, food security and the impact of producing food has on climate change.

NFU Cymru and the NFU have set the ambitious goal of reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) across the whole of agriculture in Wales and England by 2040. This is the agricultural contribution to Welsh Government's ambition of net zero by 2050.

Based on the latest scientific evidence, the NFU Cymru approach has been discussed with the Committee on Climate Change, so we believe our aim is challenging, but attainable, given the right incentives. To achieve our aim, we will need a range of measures that fall under three broad headings:

- Improving farming's productive efficiency.
- Improving land management and enhancing land use to capture more carbon.
- Boosting renewable energy and the wider bioeconomy.

The project in Wrexham proposed by Low Carbon Farming has, through their design, met with all three of the measures that NFU Cymru have identified. While reducing the impact on climate change, this project has not forgotten its role in producing high quality, affordable Welsh food. Wales must not achieve its climate change ambitions by exporting Welsh production, or our greenhouse gas emissions, to other countries. The future challenges to our global food production system are now well documented.

With so many positives coming from this project, NFU Cymru supports the planning application.

Yours sincerely,



Joe Mault

NFU Cymru County Adviser