**TIR DEWI SURVEY OF FARMERS IN POWYS – June 2020**

During April 2020, following the UK wide lockdown implemented due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Tir Dewi published a questionnaire aimed at the farmers of Powys to assess the need for farming support. We wanted to understand the need before planning to launch our service there.

As a brief background, Tir Dewi has been established in the three counties of Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire since 2015 and in that time have helped over 200 farming families in various ways. This can range from a chat on our Freephone Helpline to a detailed engagement lasting many months and involving frequent visits to the farm. Due to the apparent demand, it has been decided that Tir Dewi should consider expanding its operation to other areas of Wales.

We received a total of 136 responses to our survey which was posted on Survey Monkey and publicised on social media with support from many others in the sector including the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, the Wales YFC, NFU and FUW among others. We are especially grateful for the use of their platforms and their help.

**Conclusions**

Tir Dewi has reached the following conclusions:

* There is a need for additional Farm Support in Powys as so many farmers appear to be struggling with multiple issues on farm.
* There is no one-type of support that would solve the problem, but a wide-ranging, generalist support service would be helpful.
* Awareness of sources of support is quite high in some areas, especially financial and mental health support.
* There are massive barriers to farmers asking for help. Whether cultural or traditional, concerns over confidentiality or being judged, or not knowing what support is available and how to access it. They all stop farmers asking for help.

We all have a lot of work to do, letting farmers know that we are there to help, that we will be a local service, in Powys, provided from Powys, that we will never judge a farmer, all of our work is free, and it is entirely confidential. Remember, we have helped over 200 farmers in Dyfed – but no-one knows who they are!

**The specific responses to the survey were:**

## Question 1

**What issues do you feel are causing problems on farms in Powys?**

**What we learned**

A number of issues score very highly – all of which are of huge concern. But, given the high numbers it is reasonable to conclude that farmers are facing multiple issues – one problem on top of another and another and another. This is supported by our experience in West Wales in recent years.

Isolation is an issue worthy of mention as it can impact upon and compound all of the others listed. The more isolated a farmer is, the greater the pressure of decision-making and the more they can worry about other issues… alone.

Some participants also left comments adding other issues including NVZs, uncertainty of markets and, of course, Brexit and changes to BPS.

## Question 2

**What current support providers are you aware of?**

**What we learned**

A number of organisations had high awareness ratings, including the main Farm Unions, RABI and the DPJ Foundation. Tir Dewi scored quite low which was expected as we are not currently present in Powys.

Others, like Welsh Farm Liaison Service, FCN and Addington were either not well known or not regarded as a source of help by many.

In comments, some farmers also mentioned Farming Connect as being very helpful.

## Question 3

**What type of support do you think is most needed in your area?**

**What we learned**

Reflecting the range of issues in Q1, the answers to this question were not particularly surprising. Many forms of help are needed in Powys, addressing all sorts of needs.

The two highest scorers were Financial and Mental Health, which also mirror the awareness ratings of RABI and DPJ who provide support in these areas respectively.

Tir Dewi is encouraged by the range of other answers as well as the need to work with those being supported by RABI and DPJ to ensure that the problems which led to their financial and mental health issues are also dealt with.

## Question 4

**What barriers do you think are faced when asking for support?**

**What we learned**

Whereas Questions 1,2 and 3 all pointed to the need for support, this one asked a very different question and the answers were very concerning.

Despite the enormous need for support around the multiple problems being faced, farmers are reluctant to ask for help. They may not know what help is available locally, may not know how to access it and, most concerning, are likely not to call for fear of others finding out or of being judged.