

Alun Davies handed Welsh farm brief

13 May 2011 | By [Alistair Driver](#)

ALUN Davies, a Labour Assembly Member, who has previously backed plans for a Welsh badger cull, has been given the agriculture brief in the new Welsh Government.

But Mr Davies has been appointed as Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes, meaning agriculture effectively loses direct Cabinet representation.

Welsh First Minister Carwyn Jones has installed John Griffiths, who represents Newport East, as Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development. Mr Davies will be his deputy in what represents a new arrangement within the Welsh assembly Government.

Between them they replace Plaid Cymru's Elin Jones, who covered agriculture as Rural Affairs Minister before the election.

Mr Davies, AM for Blaenau Gwent, has recently chaired the Assembly's Rural Development sub-Committee and was widely tipped to take up the farming portfolio.

However, while his appointment is likely to be welcomed within the farming industry, the decision to effectively downgrade the agriculture role by handing it to a deputy Minister who will not attend Cabinet has already provoked disquiet among Welsh farmers.

Commenting on Twitter, Dylan Jones, Wales YFC vice chairman wrote: "Cannot understand why Welsh Agriculture now has a Deputy Minister instead of a full Minister! Doesn't look like Labour think much of farmers."

The most controversial issue facing Mr Davies will be what to do about plans for a badger cull in west Wales set in motion by Ms Jones.

Mr Davies voted in favour of the proposed badger cull when the relevant Order was challenged in the Assembly in March. "If you think that you can eradicate this disease in a painless way, you are, frankly, living in cloud-cuckoo-land. That is not how you do it. Of course it is a difficult issue, but we are elected to take difficult decisions," he said during the debate.

Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW) president Gareth Vaughan said the need to press ahead with the cull was the most important issue he faced.

"We have written to Mr Davies congratulating him on his appointment, and asking for a meeting to discuss his new portfolio and a range of key topics," Mr Vaughan said.

“At the top of the list will be the need to continue the badger cull plans in north Pembrokeshire – an issue regarding which Mr Davies has been extremely supportive – and the new government’s position on CAP reform.”

Mr Jones was able to appoint an all-Labour Ministerial team, ending the Plaid Cymru coalition, after his party won 30 seats in last Thursday’s elections, just short of an overall majority in the Assembly.

Announcing details of his new Cabinet team, the First Minister said, “I am delighted to have appointed such a talented and able team to deliver on our commitments to the people of Wales.

“We will work tirelessly to improve the delivery of public services in Wales and create opportunities for everyone as we fight to protect Wales from the challenging financial and economic situation we are in.”