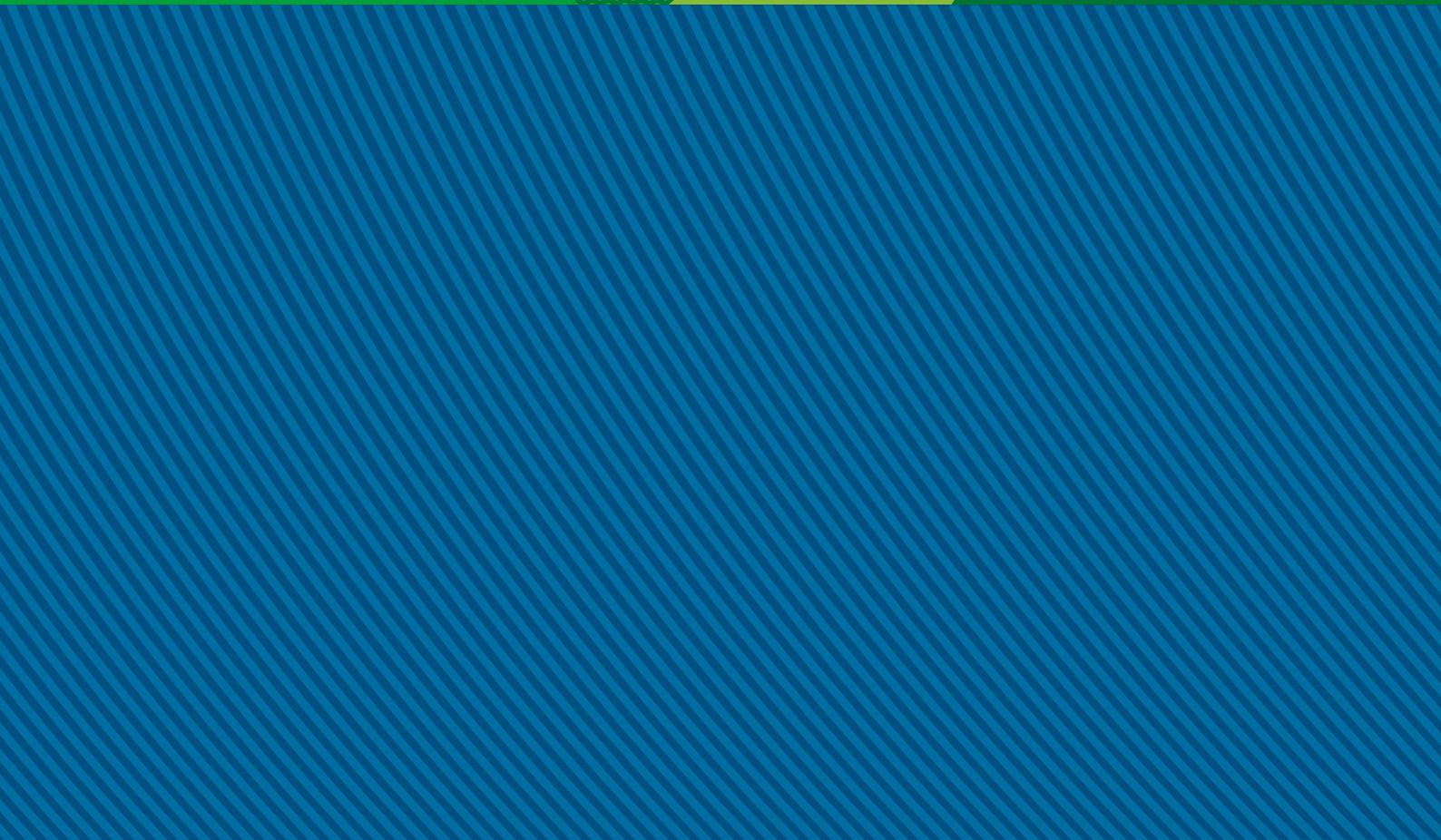


**Countryside
Alliance**



Brexit Policy Document

Sustaining a Living and Working Countryside
outside of the European Union



Foreword



For the past 20 years the Countryside Alliance has been at the heart of some of the most important issues that affect our countryside. There have been many significant events during this time, but the decision to leave the European Union is likely to be one of the most important to date.

Decisions that are taken this year, and throughout the course of our negotiations to leave the EU, will determine the future of our countryside for a generation and beyond.

A new relationship with Europe brings opportunities. We have the chance to consider which EU policies are

working and which ones are not, and develop an agricultural policy that is more appropriate for farming in this country. However, there are challenges and Brexit will only be a success if the interests of rural communities are central to the decision making.

This is not simply self-interest. The countryside is vital for our food and farming industry, provides public goods and recreation for millions of people, and its landscapes are an important part of our cultural heritage and home to an astonishing range of wildlife and habitats. A successful living and working countryside is important for us all.

It is essential that the people who have the task of managing our countryside are given a voice, and listened to, as these important decisions are made. The Countryside Alliance will help to ensure this happens, including through the publication of this policy document, which I am pleased to introduce.

The Baroness Mallalieu QC
President, Countryside Alliance

Contents

Introduction	2
Food and Farming	4
Trade	
Food Labelling	
Labour	
Support Payments	
Shooting and Conservation	11
Wildlife Protection	
Trade	
Travel	
Regulations	
Landscapes and Communities	16
Countryside Management	
Environment	
Tourism	
Digital Communications	

Introduction



On 29 March 2017, the Prime Minister issued the formal notification of the UK's intention to leave the European Union, following the result of the referendum on 23 June 2016. The UK Government has two years to secure the best possible deal for all regions and communities of the UK.

The decision to leave the EU will have an impact on the countryside and the people who live and work there, which is why we have produced this policy document.

Decisions that are made in relation to trade, regulations, agricultural and environmental policies, will shape the future of our countryside for many years to come. At the heart of these decisions are defining questions about the kind of landscapes we want to create, the food we want to eat, and the communities we want to develop.

This policy document highlights the issues that need to be addressed in order to achieve a vibrant countryside and sustainable rural communities. In each section it will set out the challenges and opportunities of developing a new relationship with the EU, and any new trade deals with non-EU countries. It will demonstrate that sustaining a living and working countryside is not just important for rural communities but for the country as a whole.

- ♦ **Section 1: Food and Farming.** This is a nationally important industry, generating over £108 billion a year for the UK economy and employing one in eight people. The UK produces some of the best food in the world, with the highest standards of safety and animal welfare. Our new relationship with the EU, and any new trade deals with non-EU countries, must protect these standards and allow our produce to be promoted globally and compete on the basis of quality. Leaving the EU provides the opportunity to develop an agricultural policy that is appropriate for the UK, targeting support payments for the public good provided by farmers.
- ♦ **Section 2: Shooting and Conservation.** Shooting is worth £2 billion to the UK economy and supports the equivalent of 74,000 full time jobs, many of which are in some of our most rural areas. People who shoot and hunt benefit from trade and travel opportunities with countries within the EU and these should be retained and developed as part of the UK's new relationship with the EU. Leaving the EU provides an opportunity to ensure that wildlife protection laws and regulations affecting shooting are fit for purpose and appropriate for the UK.
- ♦ **Section 3: Landscapes and Communities** The British countryside is famous around the world and sustains our rural communities, wildlife and habitats, and much of our important tourist industry. The importance of farming and traditional land management in creating and maintaining some of our most iconic rural landscapes and their communities must be recognised in our approach to countryside management outside the EU. The policies which the EU has introduced to improve environmental standards, particularly in water quality, should be continued and developed in a way that is appropriate for the UK.

Food and Farming



KEY POLICIES

- ♦ Maintain tariff-free trade with the EU in food and agricultural produce. Ensure that any new trade deals with non-EU countries recognise and protect the high standards of safety and animal welfare which UK consumers expect and which our farmers and producers adhere to.
- ♦ Develop a comprehensive food labelling policy and extend mandatory country of origin labelling to lightly processed meats and some dairy products. Continue and develop protections for regional and speciality food and drink products in order to support UK farmers and producers.
- ♦ Ensure that UK farmers and producers continue to have access to the EU labour market, which may include the reintroduction of a Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme.
- ♦ Establish a fully funded agricultural policy with support payments targeted at those farmers who are providing the most amount of public good but not being rewarded for this by the market.

Our food and farming industry is nationally important, generating over £108 billion a year for the UK economy and employing one in eight people. It is particularly important for our most rural areas where farming is often central to the economic and social life of the community as well as playing a vital role in conservation.

The UK produces some of the best food in the world, with the highest standards of safety and animal welfare. Our new relationship with the EU, and any new trade deals with non-EU countries, must protect these standards and allow our produce to be promoted globally and compete on the basis of quality.

Being part of the Single Market provides UK farmers and producers with tariff-free access to the EU market and labour, and the UK Government must ensure that these benefits are maintained after we leave the EU.

Leaving the EU provides the opportunity to develop an agricultural policy that is appropriate for the UK, targeting support payments for the public good provided by farmers. It also provides the opportunity to improve food labelling to ensure that consumers have the ability and confidence to support British farmers and producers.



TRADE

- ◆ Trade is vitally important to the success of our food and farming industry. For over 40 years the UK has been part of a single European market, which prohibits tariffs on goods travelling between the UK and other Member States. For agriculture, membership of the Single Market has meant significant protection from non-EU food imports, the creation of an internal market where competition is primarily between Member States, and unrestricted access to the EU market.
- ◆ Approximately 62 percent of UK agricultural exports go to the EU, while approximately 70 percent of UK agricultural imports come from the EU. Food production and the processing supply chain is complex and often involves several countries within the EU. In recognition of the importance of trade with the EU, it is vital that the UK Government seeks to maintain tariff-free access to the EU market for food and agricultural produce. Particular attention should be given to minimising disruption to existing trade relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- ◆ Agricultural goods generally carry higher import tariffs than other commodities. If the UK Government does not establish a new trade agreement with the EU prior to leaving and adopts World Trade Organisation terms, the £12 billion worth of food and agricultural produce which the UK exports to the EU each year would face the prospect of high tariffs. This would be damaging to UK producers and EU consumers.
- ◆ Approximately 90 percent of UK beef, sheep, and dairy exports go to the EU and high tariffs would be particularly damaging to some of our most rural areas where farming is a vital part of the local economy and community. The EU market is particularly important for certain cuts of meat and offal where there is little domestic demand and therefore exports are a significant proportion of carcass value.
- ◆ The EU is obliged by the World Trade Organisation to offer reduced (or tariff free) import opportunities to certain types of agricultural produce from outside of the EU under Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQ). There is currently a TRQ in place for lamb from New Zealand

and hormone-free beef from Argentina and North America which allows an annual quota of meat to avoid the usual import tariffs. The UK Government must ensure that the TRQs for agricultural produce are not passed back to the UK unless there is a guarantee that UK farmers will continue to have tariff-free access to the EU market.

- ◆ As well as maintaining tariff-free trade with the EU, the UK Government must ensure that food and agricultural produce are central to any new trade deals with non-EU countries to open up new export markets. We welcome the UK Government's continued efforts to open up markets in Asia. In China the value of food and drink exports from the UK has increased by over 50 percent from 2015 to 2016 and is now worth £439.5 million.

Approximately 62 percent of UK agricultural exports go to the EU, while approximately 70 percent of UK agricultural imports come from the EU.

- ◆ As the UK Government develops new trading relationships with non-EU countries, it must be ambitious but it must also be pragmatic. A shift towards promoting export markets outside of the EU is likely to increase the need for UK agriculture to become more competitive, but there will be some farmers who will always struggle to compete on price in the global market. Farmers in the uplands, and other marginal areas, are not in fair competition with global producers who are operating in very different environments, often with fewer safety and animal welfare laws to comply with, meaning their production costs are significantly lower. This type of upland and marginal farming does, however, provide a vital public good in maintaining some of our most iconic rural landscapes and their communities. The interests of these farmers must be safeguarded in any new trade deals.

- ◆ Food and agricultural products should be treated as 'sensitive' in trade negotiations with non-EU countries to recognise that the high standards of safety and animal welfare which UK consumers expect, and our laws require, adds to the cost of production for our farmers. There are significant differences in legislation and best practice between the UK and many non-EU countries in areas such as biotechnology, hormone growth enhancers, and pathogen reduction treatments. There must be recognition of these differences in any new trade deals to avoid downward harmonisation and a lowering of our high standards. Flooding the domestic market with cheaper imports would put UK farmers at a competitive disadvantage and ultimately risk putting many out of business.
- ◆ Many of the countries with which new trade deals are seen as a priority, such as Australia, the USA and Brazil are also large meat exporting countries. These countries are likely to seek extensive agricultural concessions as part of any agreement with the UK and our farmers must not be used as a 'bargaining chip' in the negotiations. This is particularly important as World Trade Organisation rules do not allow the process by which something was produced to be taken into consideration when providing state support which is considered to have a distorting effect on the market.
- ◆ The ability of the UK to produce its own food must not be undermined by any new trade deals. Skills and experience in the food and farming industry have taken a long time to develop and in many cases would be hard to replace if they were lost. Securing our ability to produce food should not be mistaken for self-sufficiency as the UK will continue to import food and agricultural produce, just as it will continue to export. Food security will be achieved by ensuring fair competition for UK farmers and producers in EU and non-EU markets and this must be a priority for the UK Government.
- ◆ UK agriculture underpins our food manufacturing sector by providing over 60 percent of the produce and raw materials involved. This is a vitally important sector, sustaining 3.8 million jobs and adding over £21 billion (GVA) to the UK economy every year. Food manufacturing is nationally important and

benefits communities across the country, although it has particular importance in many rural areas. The UK's new relationship with the EU and any new trade deals with non-EU countries will be vital to the future success or otherwise of food manufacturing in this country.

FOOD LABELLING

- ◆ Food labelling is vitally important in enabling UK farmers to compete fairly and in giving consumers the ability and confidence to 'buy British'. Our new relationship with the EU and any new trade deals with non-EU countries must protect market equality by ensuring that imports are produced to UK standards and product labelling should distinguish country of origin and production methods in a way that is clear and not misleading.

The UK currently has a total of 73 products that benefit from protected geographical or traditional status under EU Law.

- ◆ The EU has established mandatory country of origin labelling for beef, lamb, pork and poultry. However, this does not include foods where the meat is processed or an ingredient, such as sausages and ready meals. Therefore it remains the case that sausages made in the UK using Danish pork can still be legally labelled as 'British'. The introduction of legislation making it a legal requirement for the country of origin to be included on lightly processed meats such as sausages and bacon would help support farmers by providing consumers with greater choice and confidence.
- ◆ The EU Commission has resisted calls to extend mandatory country of origin labelling to dairy products on the grounds that such a move would be too costly and bureaucratic. We believe that consumers would be willing to pay more for this information and we would welcome legislation

extending mandatory country of origin labelling to certain dairy products such as milk, butter and cheese, building on the work that has already been done under voluntary schemes. The UK Government should also explore options for extending mandatory country of origin labelling to other foods such as cereals, fruit and vegetables.

- ◆ The UK has a wide range of regional and speciality food producers which should be promoted at home and abroad. The quality and authenticity of these products is often recognised in their labelling, such as 'Lakeland Herdwick' lamb and mutton, from pure breed Herdwick sheep in the Lake District. For producers, these labels help to add value to their products, which often have high costs of production, and ensure their standards are maintained. The UK currently has a total of 73 products that benefit from protected geographical or traditional status under EU law and the UK Government should look to develop its own system of legal recognition for product names outside of the EU.
- ◆ The UK Government must ensure that the three existing types of EU protected product names: Protected Geographical Indication (Scotch Beef), Protected Designation of Origin (Lakeland Herdwick), and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (Traditional Gloucestershire Old Spot Pork), continue to have the same level of protection both in the UK and EU market. It is also important that this protection is included in any new trade deals with non-EU countries, which may involve working to develop trademark protection in countries to which UK farmers and producers export.

UK farmers and producers employ over 80,000 seasonal workers every year, the vast majority of these people come from countries within the EU.

LABOUR

- ◆ As part of the Single Market, our food and farming industry benefits from the free movement of people which has provided access to labour from across Europe. People from the EU play an important role in harvesting, production and processing across the food supply chain, in both skilled and unskilled jobs.
- ◆ The UK Government must consider how our future relationship with the EU will enable people to travel to this country to work in our food and farming industry, particularly at important times of the year. UK farmers and producers employ over 80,000 seasonal workers every year, the vast majority of these people come from countries within the EU.
- ◆ There are indications that it has already become difficult to recruit people from the EU following the referendum result. The decrease in the value of sterling combined with uncertainty about the UK's future relationship with the EU has reduced the appeal of working in the UK for some people. In order to ensure that UK farmers and producers are able to attract the labour they require, it is vital that the UK Government provides clarity on travel arrangements as soon as possible.
- ◆ The UK Government should also consider the reintroduction of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS), or similar scheme, which allows a person to enter a country to undertake a specific role with a specific employer for a set period of time. The UK Government removed the SAWS in 2013 following the removal of freedom of movement restrictions on people from Romania and Bulgaria. The reintroduction of the SAWS, or similar scheme, could be one way to help UK farmers and producers in the event of removal of freedom of movement after the UK leaves the EU.
- ◆ Any new travel scheme for agricultural workers should also include the requirements of other land-based industries such as forestry, shooting and game farming. Game farmers are not included in the definition of 'agriculture' in the Agriculture Act 1947, so any new scheme will need to adopt a broader definition of 'agriculture' to ensure that people from the EU can continue to work on UK game farms.

SUPPORT PAYMENTS

- ♦ Farmers in the UK benefit from support payments as part of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). CAP payments are currently divided into two categories which paid UK farmers a combined total of £2.8 billion in 2015. The majority of funding is provided as direct payments under Pillar 1 and additional payments are available to help farmers implement development schemes under Pillar 2. Support payments from the EU currently make up approximately 50-60 percent of farm income in the UK.
- ♦ Support payments play an important role in the food and farming industry and the wider economy. In 2015, it was estimated that the contribution of farming to the UK across all areas was worth 7.4 times the funding it received in direct payments under Pillar 1 (approximately £2.2 billion). This is particularly important in rural areas where farming remains an important part of the economic and social life of the local community. We welcomed the announcement from the UK Government that funding under Pillar 1 will be guaranteed until 2020 and the commitment that projects under Pillar 2, signed before the Autumn Statement in 2016, will also have their funding guaranteed.
- ♦ It is important that CAP is replaced with a fully funded UK agricultural policy to be in place and ready to be implemented before existing funding is removed. Farming in the UK has developed within the framework of CAP for the last 40 years and therefore the introduction of a new agricultural policy will need to include transitional arrangements to ensure that farm businesses in the UK are able to adjust as decisions often need to be taken years in advance. Farmers, particularly in upland and marginal areas, are often small to medium sized enterprises and a sudden change in agricultural policy would risk the sustainability of some of these businesses which are dependent upon support payments.
- ♦ The administration of the new agricultural policy must recognise the fact that many farmers are still unable to receive high speed broadband and those who are connected do not always have the skills to be able to use it to full advantage. The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations must ensure that applications under a new agricultural policy are able to be made by post as well as online for as long as universal connectivity is lacking.
- ♦ The UK Government has indicated that it wants to see a more market-orientated agricultural policy with a focus on competitiveness. Policies designed to make our farmers more competitive should be welcomed, however this must not be done to the detriment of the environment.
- ♦ Despite efforts and incentives to improve competitiveness, there will continue to be some parts of the UK where farmers cannot survive on the profits of food production alone and this needs to be addressed in a new agricultural policy as well as continued efforts to support diversification.
- ♦ Farmers in the uplands and other marginal areas are limited to low intensity grazing which has small profit margins and is often more exposed to market volatility than other sectors of the industry. Their work, however, often provides the most amount of public good in creating and maintaining some of our most iconic rural landscapes, which are so important to our cultural heritage and provide the recreational opportunities people value so much. A new agricultural policy should target support payments to those farmers who are providing the most amount of public good but not being rewarded for this by the market. This also means ensuring that support is provided to the people and businesses that have the task of carrying out this work on a daily basis.



- ◆ Farmers play a vital role in conservation. Using the skills and experience of farmers is often the best way to improve biodiversity and secure the future of our vital natural resources. If farming in upland and other marginal areas were to be abandoned because of changes to support payments, there would be detrimental effects on the habitat in these areas and the species they support.
- ◆ Farming is often central to the economic and social life of some of our most rural communities. As well as support payments helping to keep livestock on the hills, they also help to keep the local school open and provide employment in the wider rural economy from shops and garages to hotels and pubs. The importance of support payments to rural communities needs to be recognised when developing a new agricultural policy as without this support many of the most rural communities face the prospect of becoming unsustainable.
- ◆ The scope and level of funding of the new agricultural policy will be constrained by World Trade Organisation rules which state that “the amount of payment shall be limited to the extra costs or loss of income involved in complying with government programmes.” The principle of income foregone limits the extent to which payments can be used to support the provision of public good when there is no market for this and the UK Government will need to consider how best to provide support whilst remaining compliant with trade rules.

Farming is often central to the economic and social life of our most rural communities.



Shooting and Conservation



KEY POLICIES

- ♦ Prioritise wildlife and habitat conservation and review existing levels of protection to ensure that they are fit for purpose and appropriate for the UK, as well as fulfilling our international obligations.
- ♦ Maintain tariff-free trade with the EU in firearms, component parts and ammunition, as well as game meat and gamebirds. It is vital that the negotiations to leave the EU are not used to advance an anti-shooting agenda by restricting trade in these areas.
- ♦ Ensure that travel opportunities to and from the EU are maintained and that those travelling to take part in country sports face no additional bureaucracy or costs. This should include the retention of the EU Firearms Pass.
- ♦ Ensure that any future changes to our strict firearms laws, or the use of lead ammunition, can only be made by Westminster rather than being imposed by changes in the EU.

Shooting is worth £2 billion to the UK economy and supports the equivalent of 74,000 full time jobs, many of which are in some of our most rural areas. Over 600,000 people in the UK take part in shooting every year. As well as shooting being a hobby and a sport, it is also a necessity for many jobs such as farming and gamekeeping, and plays a vital role in conservation and countryside management.

People who shoot and hunt benefit from trade and travel opportunities with countries within the EU and these should be retained and developed as part of the UK's new relationship with the EU and any new trade deals with non-EU countries. It is also important that people from the EU retain the ability to visit the UK to shoot and hunt without any additional bureaucracy and costs.

Leaving the EU provides an opportunity to ensure that wildlife protection laws and regulations affecting shooting are fit for purpose and appropriate for the UK.



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

- ♦ The EU has developed nature conservation policy that is comprehensive and ambitious compared with many other parts of the world. It has been a driving force for establishing and strengthening wildlife and habitat protection and this should be continued after we leave the EU.
- ♦ At the centre of EU nature conservation policy are the Nature Directives (the Birds Directive 79/409/EEC and the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC). These Directives provide general protection of wildlife in the EU, in particular through the protection of sites that are of specific importance for certain species and habitats. The Directives are transposed into UK law through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and regulations which offer important legal protection to our wild birds and habitats.
- ♦ The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations should take the opportunity of leaving the EU to review existing levels of wildlife and habitat protection to ensure that they are fit for purpose and appropriate for the UK, as well as fulfilling our international obligations. This is an important opportunity to develop a sustainable nature conservation policy that balances the particular requirements of UK species and habitats while taking account of our economic and social requirements.
- ♦ There is abundant evidence that where land is managed for the benefit of game, other species naturally flourish and many shoots undertake conservation work for its own sake. Nearly 2 million hectares in the UK are actively managed for conservation as a result of shooting, with shoots spending £250 million each year on conservation work. As we leave the EU, it is vital that decisions about wildlife protection are not used to promote an anti-shooting agenda by changing the status of existing quarry species.
- ♦ The UK Government should continue to cooperate closely with the EU on biosecurity to help prevent and contain outbreaks of potentially damaging diseases such as avian influenza which are a significant threat to wild and reared birds.

Nearly 2 million hectares in the UK are actively managed for conservation as a result of shooting, with shoots spending £250 million each year on conservation work.

TRADE

- ♦ Shooting and hunting benefit from trade with countries within the EU across a number of areas. As a member of the Single Market and Customs Union, this trade is currently tariff-free and avoids other frictions to trade. It is vital that the interests of people who shoot and hunt are considered as part of our new relationship with the EU.

i) FIREARMS

- ♦ The majority of firearms that are used in this country are imported from countries within the EU, particularly Spain and Italy. Importers currently enjoy excellent relationships with manufacturers based in countries within the EU and have few problems importing into this country. The UK Government should seek to maintain tariff-free trade with the EU in firearms, component parts, and ammunition. It is also important that imports do not face other frictions to trade, such as an increase in bureaucracy and regulation which have the potential to disrupt the supply chain and add to costs.
- ♦ Some of the world's finest shotguns and rifles are made in this country and exported around the world. Maintaining tariff-free trade with the EU in component parts is important for our domestic manufacturers as many of them rely on component parts from countries within the EU. The UK Government should use the opportunity of leaving the EU to open new markets for our world-famous guns, particularly in Commonwealth countries.

- ♦ Capital expenditure on firearms and ammunition in the UK is over £150 million every year and approximately 820 jobs in the UK are directly linked to the manufacture, sale or servicing of firearms alone. It is vital that these jobs and investment are supported as part of our new relationship with the EU and in any new trade deals with non-EU countries.

ii) GAME MEAT

- ♦ There is a growing market for game meat in this country. Figures for 2015/16 show that sales of game meat in the UK exceeded £100 million and are forecast to rise to £143 million by 2020. We also export a significant amount of game meat to the EU and it is vital that UK producers continue to have tariff-free access to this market.
- ♦ As we establish new trade deals with non-EU countries, it is important that UK game meat is promoted in order to develop new markets for our high quality produce around the world. The UK Government should also use the opportunity of leaving the EU to improve the labelling of game meat products. This should include a commitment to extend mandatory country of origin labelling to ensure that only game shot in this country can be labelled 'British'.

iii) GAMEBIRDS

- ♦ The majority of shoots in this country rely to some extent on reared gamebirds and many shoots import gamebird eggs or chicks from countries within the EU. At present, approximately 50 percent of pheasants (14 million) and 75 percent of redleg partridges (5.3 million) reared and released in this country come from eggs or chicks imported from countries within the EU. It is important that these imports are able to continue in order to ensure that shoot providers have a range of options for sourcing gamebirds.
- ♦ The current EU regulations on the welfare of animals during transportation require high standards covering journey times and distance, accommodation and feed, veterinary checks, and training for handlers and hauliers. We would welcome a continuation of these standards as part of our new relationship with the EU. However, it is vital that the negotiations are not used to

advance an anti-shooting agenda by restricting the movement of gamebird eggs and chicks.

- ♦ Leaving the EU presents an opportunity for UK gamebird farmers to increase supply for the domestic market. The UK has some of the highest standards of animal welfare in the world and this includes gamebirds reared for sporting purposes. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 provides the general principles of welfare in England and Wales and there are specific statutory codes of practice in place. We encourage the UK Government to recognise the high standards of welfare to which UK gamebird farmers adhere and look at measures to support domestic producers.

It is vital that the interests of people who shoot and hunt are considered as part of our new relationship with the EU.

TRAVEL

i) TRAVEL FROM THE EU

- ♦ Country sports tourism is an important economic contributor in many rural communities, particularly in the winter months when income from other forms of tourism is often reduced. Visitors from countries within the EU are an important part of this market and therefore it is essential that country sports in the UK remain easily accessible to people from the EU. In 2014/15 a total of 8,810 Visitor Permits were granted in England and Wales for people to bring firearms into the UK for game or sport shooting. Considering that most visitors will use a shotgun or rifle provided by the estate or shooting ground they are visiting, the total number of visitors involved in country sports tourism will be significantly higher than the number of Visitor Permits issued.
- ♦ Our future relationship with the EU must ensure that people from countries within the EU are able to travel

to the UK for the purpose of country sports tourism without an increase in bureaucracy and costs. The UK Government should also look at ways of increasing country sports tourism from non-EU countries.

ii) TRAVEL TO THE EU

- Some people who shoot and hunt in this country take part in sporting holidays or shows across Europe. It is important that people in the UK retain the ability to travel with their firearms to countries within the EU without an increase in bureaucracy and costs. This should include the retention of the European Firearms Pass (EFP), or equivalent, which is the single document required for travel to countries within the EU. Holders of a firearms certificate have the automatic right to an EFP and can obtain one free on demand from their local police force. In 2014/15 a total of 15,677 EFPs were granted by police forces in England in Wales which are valid for as long as the firearms certificate is valid.
- It is important that our new relationship with the EU permits easy movement of working animals, such as dogs, ferrets and horses. This should include the retention of the EU pet travel scheme and the option to retain horse passports for owners who wish to travel with their animals to countries within the EU.

Country sports tourism is an important economic contributor in many rural communities.

REGULATIONS

i) LEAD AMMUNITION

- The UK Government has concluded that no further restrictions are currently required on lead ammunition following Defra’s response to the Lead Ammunition Group report in July 2016. However, it remains unknown whether it will be restricted in the EU by the REACH process (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) and the ECHA (European Chemicals Agency). Regardless

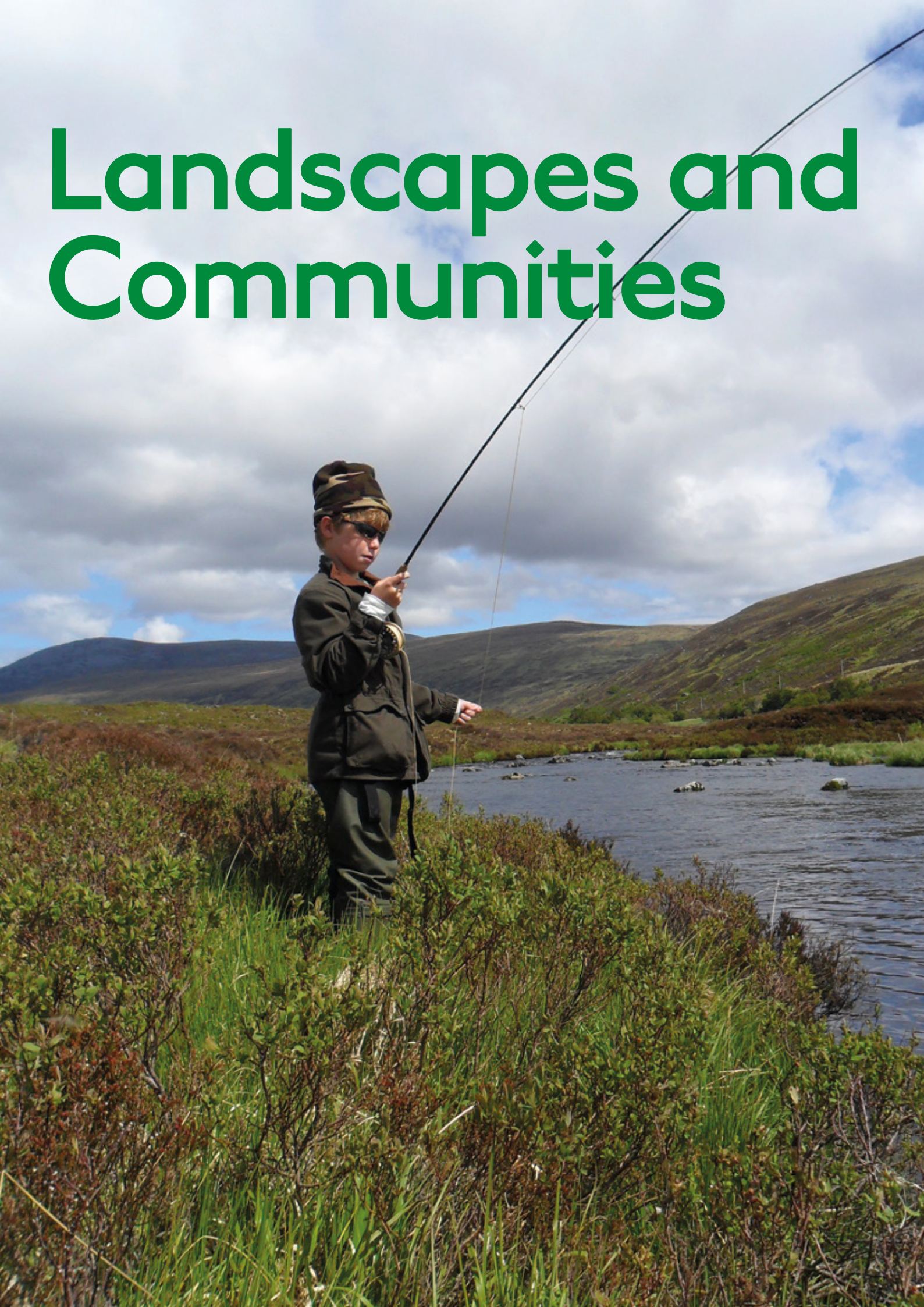
of our future relationship with the EU, any further restrictions on lead ammunition in Europe will have an impact on shooting in the UK on account of our close trading relationship with countries within the EU. For this reason, the UK Government must continue to resist any unscientific attempts to restrict lead ammunition in Europe for as long as we are members of the EU. The UK Government must also ensure that any possible further restrictions on lead ammunition in Europe do not apply in this country unless an appropriate risk assessment has been undertaken.

ii) FIREARMS LEGISLATION

- By leaving the EU, it is likely that the EU Firearms Directive 91/477/EEC (EFD) will cease to apply in this country. The UK already has some of the strictest gun laws in the world which exceed the current requirements of the EFD in many regards. The most recent reforms to the EFD are limited and will not affect the majority of shooting in this country. However, further changes are likely and leaving the EU will ensure that any future changes to firearms law can only be made by Westminster which will ensure that our gun laws are appropriate for the UK.



Landscapes and Communities



KEY POLICIES

- ♦ Recognise the importance of traditional management in creating and maintaining our iconic countryside landscapes and their communities, and ensure this is supported outside of the EU.
- ♦ Maintain environmental improvements, particularly in water quality, and develop a national fisheries policy which supports recreational fishing.
- ♦ Ensure that tourists from countries within the EU can continue to visit the UK without additional bureaucracy and costs. The UK should be promoted as a tourist destination in non-EU countries as part of any new trade deals.
- ♦ Invest in digital communications to ensure that rural businesses are able to play their part in the national economy and compete on a global basis.

The British countryside is famous around the world and sustains our rural communities, wildlife and habitats, and much of our important tourist industry.

The importance of farming and traditional land management in creating and maintaining some of our most iconic rural landscapes and their communities must be recognised in our approach to countryside management outside of the EU. The policies which the EU has introduced to improve environmental standards, particularly in water quality, should be continued and developed in a way that is appropriate for the UK.

Digital communications give rural businesses, including our important tourist industry, a window onto the world. As we leave the EU it will become even more important for rural areas to be connected to mobile and high speed broadband in order to compete globally.



COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT

- ◆ Many areas of our countryside look ‘wild’ but the landscape is the result of existing management from farmers and other land managers which has developed over many centuries. Through the maintenance of fields, walls and hedges, woodlands and other landscape features, farmers and other land managers play an important role in creating and maintaining some of our most iconic rural landscapes, including National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- ◆ The decision to leave the EU has opened a public discussion about the future of countryside management, which we welcome. There are important questions about how to manage our countryside and support rural communities after we leave the EU, particularly in upland and other marginal farming areas. However, we are concerned by the suggestion that existing management is part of the problem and that management should be withdrawn or scaled back as part of a policy of ‘rewilding’.
- ◆ There is no single definition of ‘rewilding’. A report from the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee in January 2017 stated their preferred definition was “...reducing human intervention in some areas, preferably in a planned way, so that natural environmental processes will have more scope to shape the composition and structure of such landscapes...”. The Committee acknowledged that ‘rewilding’ was a contested term and concluded that there was not enough evidence to recommend a general policy on this after we leave the EU, which we welcomed. However, we are concerned by the Report’s suggestion that rewilding “may arise out of necessity” if changes to support payments or unfavourable trade deals “lead to less land being viable for profitable farming” after we leave the EU.
- ◆ Supporters of ‘rewilding’ often see farming as an obstacle to conservation but this ignores its benefit in many areas. Low intensity grazing plays a valuable role in preserving the Lake District’s environment, which is home to extensive areas of rare habitat, internationally important rivers and lakes, and a key source of drinking water for cities in the North West of England. If remote

areas in the UK were to be abandoned as part of a policy of ‘rewilding’ they would soon revert to scrub or woodland which would threaten some of our rarest moorland and grassland habitats.

- ◆ In many cases, ‘rewilding’ land management practices result in the loss of agricultural land or a reduction in its productivity. Land that is flooded as part of managed river and coastal flooding will be difficult to restore if there is a change in policy and the reintroduction of apex predators such as lynx and wolves can also make the land less productive by increasing predation. The economic advantages of ‘rewilding’ do not outweigh the potential loss of income to existing businesses or the social impact resulting from a loss of traditional employment.
- ◆ Without a continuation of traditional land management practices many iconic rural landscapes would be lost with negative consequences for rural communities, wildlife and habitats and the tourist industry. It is vital that the UK Government continues to recognise the importance of traditional management and supports this after we leave the EU.

Many areas of our countryside look ‘wild’ but the landscape is the result of existing management from farmers and other land managers.

ENVIRONMENT

- ◆ The EU has developed environmental policy in a broad range of areas, including air quality, climate change, and waste and water management. There have been significant improvements in many of these areas as a result of EU regulations and it is important that these are continued and developed after we leave the EU.

- ◆ One of the most important areas of EU environmental policy has been water quality and the impact of EU Directives on the UK has been highly significant. The most important change over recent decades has been on waste water treatment which has led to significant improvements in the quality of rivers and coastal waters. Many EU Directives aimed at improving water quality are also vitally important for protecting fish, their habitats, and a range of other wildlife. Many fish stocks in and around the UK are in decline, but protection of EU Directives has generally slowed this decline and in some cases, particularly urban rivers, has led to a partial rehabilitation of stocks.
- ◆ The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive 91/271/EEC made it illegal for untreated sewage and industrial chemicals to enter waterways, which helped to transform rivers like the Thames, Tees and Mersey, enabling fish and other wildlife to return. The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC established a system for the protection and improvement of all aspects of the watercourse including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater. The revised Bathing Water Directive 2006/7/EC requires the UK to monitor and assess beaches used by large numbers of bathers for certain bacteria and includes a classification and notification system so that the public are aware of the status of the bathing water.
- ◆ It is important that the improvements made under these Directives are not lost. We welcomed the UK Government's commitment to maintain existing EU environmental legislation and regulations as part of the 'Great Repeal Bill', although we are concerned that this will not include all existing environmental protections. It is also important that necessary arrangements are in place for robust enforcement of environmental protection from government agencies in order to replace the existing responsibilities of the European Commission and the EU Court of Justice.
- ◆ The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations should take the opportunity of leaving the EU to review existing levels of environmental protection to ensure that they are fit for purpose and appropriate for the UK, as well as fulfilling our international obligations. This should include the development of a national fisheries policy, covering both marine and freshwater fish, which takes much greater account of the interests and requirements of recreational fisheries.
- ◆ There is abundant evidence that where rivers are managed for fishing, other wildlife benefits and many fishers undertake conservation work for its own sake. In 2015 the rod licence raised nearly £23 million and it is vital that this money continues to be ring-fenced to ensure that the Environment Agency has the necessary resources to continue to improve water quality and river conservation. The role of fishing in conservation should be recognised in Defra's 25 year plan for the environment.
- ◆ The UK is currently represented at the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) as part of the EU delegation. After we leave the EU it will be vital for the UK to be represented in its own right as one of the principal wild salmon producing nations in the North Atlantic region. This will require applying to NASCO for individual membership in advance of the UK leaving the EU, to avoid losing influence within international salmon management negotiations and agreements.

Many fish stocks in and around the UK are in decline, but protection of EU Directives has generally slowed this decline and in some cases, particularly urban rivers, has led to a partial rehabilitation of stocks.



TOURISM

- ◆ Tourism is vitally important for many rural areas, sustaining jobs in a number of areas from accommodation and hospitality to leisure and retail, which supports the wider rural economy. In 2015 the UK received the highest number of international visitors since records began (1961), with 36.1 million visitors, helping to generate more than £62 billion for the UK economy. Visitors from the EU are an important part of our tourist market. In 2015 more than 60 percent of international holiday visitors and more than 70 percent of business visitors to the UK were from countries within the EU.
- ◆ Rural tourism in the UK benefits from visa-free travel between countries within the EU and it is important that this continues for short leisure and business trips after we leave the EU. Any additional bureaucracy

or costs on travel to the UK from the EU would place the UK at a disadvantage with other European tourist destinations as far as EU nationals are concerned.

- ◆ As well as maintaining access to the European tourist market, the UK Government should take the opportunity of leaving the EU to open new tourist markets. Enhanced visa services have already increased the number of visitors from China and this is a model which the UK Government should consider adopting with other countries. This should be combined with increased funding of Visit Britain and the GREAT campaign to ensure that the UK, and in particular the countryside, is promoted globally as a tourist destination.
- ◆ One of the main growth areas is food and drink tourism, which represents a major component of

tourism expenditure in rural areas. Total tourism expenditure on local food and drink has been estimated by Defra to total £2.6 billion across England in 2013, of which £1.4 billion was estimated to be spent in rural areas. Promoting local food and drink as part of a tourism strategy can deliver additional economic and environmental benefits; including supporting diversification of farms and producer businesses, creating additional demands for skills and training, and reducing food miles and carbon emissions. This reinforces the need for the UK to develop its own system of protected geographical and traditional product names outside of the EU, and improve food labelling more broadly in order to promote British produce.

- ◆ In order to compete at the global level, it is vital that the UK Government invests in connectivity, both in helping tourists travel across the country and also in digital connectivity to help rural businesses connect with markets around the world. Rural businesses, keen to compete with cities and international destinations, need the connectivity and skills to offer high-quality, informative and reliable websites, with the ability to book online.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

- ◆ Leaving the EU and establishing new trade deals with countries around the world will increase the need for UK businesses to be competitive. This means it is more important than ever that the UK Government invests in digital connectivity and skills.
- ◆ It is unacceptable that 960,000 homes in rural areas still cannot access download speeds greater than 10Mbit/s. With the drive for digital by default and the ambition for the UK to have a world leading digital economy we must get the basics right by ensuring that people in the countryside have access to reliable high speed broadband.
- ◆ Most of the existing broadband delivery contracts are only designed to run until 2018/19 and few currently involve substantial funding from the EU. However, previous broadband delivery programmes have benefitted from EU funding, including the Superfast Cornwall programme which received over £53 million from the EU Regional Development Fund (ERDF) between 2011- 2015. The existing programme

which is due to be completed by the end of 2017 still receives funding from the ERDF and there are other programmes which also currently benefit from EU funding. Many farmers have benefitted from broadband investment under the EU Rural Development Programme which co-finances programmes with Member States. It is vital that the UK Government guarantees existing levels of EU funding for broadband programmes and develops its own programmes after we leave the EU.

- ◆ Outside of the EU and the Digital Single Market, there is the potential for a greater divergence between digital connectivity in the UK and countries within the EU. If the EU sets a future target for the rollout of 'ultrafast' broadband (100Mbit/s) beyond 2020, which is widely expected to happen, then the UK Government could choose to ignore it and be less ambitious. We believe that the UK Government should seek to be at least as ambitious as the EU in digital connectivity in future and where possible look to exceed EU targets.
- ◆ The digital sector in the UK is regulated by Ofcom but decisions about state funding and competition often have to be approved by the EU Commission as part of the requirements of the Single Market. Outside the EU, Ofcom will no longer have to wait for approval from the EU before finalising new industry rules. Ofcom will no doubt remain attuned to the direction of EU telecoms regulation which will be necessary for some aspects, such as the harmonisation of radio and wireless spectrum bands, but leaving the EU will give the regulator greater autonomy which is something we welcome.

It is unacceptable that 960,000 homes in rural areas still cannot access download speeds greater than 10Mbit/s.

ABOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE

The Countryside Alliance is known for championing the countryside and defending the rural way of life, from food and farming, local businesses and services, to the injustices of poor mobile phone signal and broadband in the countryside. We represent the interests of those who live and work in the countryside and enjoy it.

With over 100,000 members and supporters the Countryside Alliance promotes and protects rural life at Parliament, in the media and on the ground.

Our vision is a future for the countryside which both preserves its traditional values and promotes a thriving rural community and economy; a countryside sustainably managed and sustainably enjoyed; a countryside where rural communities have equal access to the facilities and services enjoyed in urban communities; a countryside where people can pursue their businesses, activities and lives in a society that appreciates and understands their way of life.

**Countryside
Alliance**



Countryside Alliance
1 Spring Mews
Tinworth Street
London SE11 5AN

T: 020 7840 9200

E: info@countryside-alliance.org

W: www.countryside-alliance.org

Words by James Somerville-Meikle / April 2017