

20 July 2017

Countryside Alliance Parliamentary Update

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Highlights

Countryside Alliance turns 20 in an important year for the countryside

The Countryside Alliance was formed on 10 July 1997 at the [Hyde Park Rally](#) to promote and defend the British countryside and rural life, both in the media and in politics. This cause is just as important 20 years on, especially as decisions taken in this Parliament in the light of Brexit will have an impact on the countryside for a generation and beyond. We look forward to working with all parliamentarians to ensure that rural communities have a voice, and are heard, as these important decisions are taken.

A Rural Charter for this Parliament

The Countryside Alliance has produced a [manifesto for the countryside](#) which highlights several key issues which truly matter to those who live and work in the countryside, from tackling rural crime and increasing the provision of affordable rural housing to ensuring universal access to high speed broadband and mobile phone signal.

Brexit fringe events at the party conferences

The Countryside Alliance will be asking how Brexit can work for the countryside at the autumn conferences. We will be joined by front bench spokespeople and rural experts. Further information will be sent out after recess. Our [Brexit Policy Document](#) provides more information about our policies in this area.

Debates

Queen's Speech – 21 June

The State Opening of Parliament took place on 21 June and the Queen's Speech was debated in both Houses of Parliament. The Countryside Alliance raised the main rural issues that need to be included in the Government's legislative agenda for the next two years. Our briefing note is available [here](#).

Affordable housing – 13 July

The Westminster Hall Debate on "Supply of homes and affordable homes to buy" was welcomed by the Countryside Alliance. It provided the opportunity to raise the lack of affordable homes in rural areas, and promote innovative policies to encourage sustainable house building. Our briefing note is available [here](#).

International trade – 6 July

A General Debate in the House of Commons on "Exiting the EU and global trade" enabled the Countryside Alliance to stress the need to protect our high standards of safety and animal welfare, and secure terms of trade that allow UK farmers and producers to compete on the basis of quality, not just price. Our briefing note is available [here](#).

Seasonal agricultural workers – 6 July

There was a Westminster Hall Debate on a "Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme" earlier this month. The Countryside Alliance welcomed the opportunity to raise the concerns of farmers and producers in recruiting the 80,000 seasonal workers that are required every year, mostly from countries within the EU. Our briefing note is available [here](#).

Rural Communities

World Heritage status for the Lake District

UNESCO's decision to grant World Heritage status to the Lake District earlier this month was good news, making it the 31st such site in the UK. Our Chief Executive, Tim Bonner, has [written an article](#) on the importance of this new status for the Lakes, and the recognition of the role that traditional management and rural communities have played in shaping this landscape.

Rural broadband still overlooked

We support the Government's ambition to deliver full fibre broadband and the announcement earlier this month of the £400million Digital Investment Fund to unlock over £1billion is welcome news for those who are going to benefit. However, it has been widely accepted that fibre to the home will be impossible to deliver to most rural areas and the Government must [support the development of alternative technologies](#) and not just focus on fibre.

Fly-tipping on the rise

The [Countryside Alliance has called for local authorities to make waste disposal easier](#) as the latest Defra figures on fly-tipping, released earlier this year, show a 4 per cent rise in incidents. These figures do not accurately reflect the growing problem of fly-tipping on private land as they are not recorded, but farmers and landowners often have to bear the brunt of the problem.

Campaign to end online abuse

The [Countryside Alliance Thunderclap campaign](#), focused on raising the awareness of online abuse and bullying of people in the countryside, reached an audience of over 1.2 million people. The campaign was supported by over 1,600 individuals and organisations who sent out the following message to their followers on 13 April, "*I stand against bullying of people in the countryside #reportonlineabuse*". Thank you to all parliamentarians who supported this, we will continue to campaign on this issue in this Parliament.

Shooting

New stats show more people enjoying shooting

[New statistics](#) released earlier this month by the Home Office show an increase in the number of firearm certificates granted by police forces in England and Wales to the end of March 2017, and 23,128 new shotgun certificate holders. The new statistics were announced shortly after the third annual [National Ladies Shooting Day](#) on 10 June in which well over 1,000 women took part.

Environment Secretary praises game shooting

The Countryside Alliance welcomed the comments made by Environment Secretary, Michael Gove MP, [at the All Party Parliamentary Group for Game and Wildlife Conservation](#) on 11 July, praising the conservation work of shooting by saying that "those who have an interest in game shooting, have by definition, an interest in sustainability" and understand "in their DNA" the need to sustain diverse habitats.

Briefing ahead of the grouse season

Ahead of the grouse season, which starts on 12 August, the Countryside Alliance has sent a [briefing note](#) to MPs and Peers which addresses some of the most frequently raised concerns about grouse shooting.

Away from Westminster

Show season

Once again the Countryside Alliance is attending the main, national game and country shows this year. Having just returned from the Great Yorkshire Show at Harrogate, the team are now looking ahead to the [Game Fair](#) at Hatfield House on 28-30 July. We are happy to provide free tickets for any parliamentarians and their staff who would like to attend. We will also be the [Royal Welsh Show](#) from 24-27 July.

MPs attend chalk stream discovery day

The Countryside Alliance was present at a [chalk stream discovery day](#) in Hampshire on 16 June, organised by the Angling Trust, to enable parliamentarians to learn more about our precious English chalk streams and unique habitats which are under threat. A number of MPs attended and it was particularly good to see Environment Minister, Thérèse Coffey MP, and Sports Minister, Tracey Crouch MP.

More children introduced to fishing

The Countryside Alliance Foundation programme, Fishing 4 Schools, continues to grow and in recent months school children from [Yorkshire](#), [Wiltshire](#), and [Sussex](#) have all benefitted from an introduction to fishing. [Two recent donations](#) will allow the programme to expand in the Eastern region and further courses will commence at local schools in September.

And finally...

Should lynx be reintroduced?

As the Lynx Trust announced their intention to seek a licence to introduce six lynx to the Kielder Forest, we asked our twitter followers for their opinion. In a highly scientific poll, 64 per cent of people did not want to see lynx reintroduced to our countryside, compared to 36 per cent who supported the move.

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