



**The All Party Parliamentary
Game and Wildlife Conservation Group
Meeting Minutes**

Thursday 16th March 2017
12:30pm - 13:30pm
Jubilee Room, Westminster Hall

Attending:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Angela Smith	MP	Ben Webster	Times
Lord Curry of Kirkharle	House of Lords	Philip Clarke	Farmers Weekly
Lady Masham of Ilton	House of Lords	Lucinda Dann	Farmers Weekly
Lady Redfern	House of Lords		
Teresa Dent	GWCT	Stephen Morant	GWCT Trustee
Andrew Gilruth	GWCT	James Duckworth-Chad	GWCT Trustee
Holly Howe	GWCT	Arthur Gilruth	
Henrietta Appleton	GWCT		
James Somerville-Meikle	Countryside Alliance	Jeremy Payne	GWCT
Jack Knott	Countryside Alliance	Ian Coghill	GWCT
Rob Yorke	Rural Commentator		
Charlie Pye-Smith	Rural Commentator		
Stephen Trotter	Director TWT England		
James Phillips	Natural England		
Gareth Morgan	RSPB		
Andrew Davis	CRAG		
Alasdair Johnstone	Richard Benyon's Representative		
Robert Lingard	Andrew Percy's office		

Minutes:

Presentation by Lord Curry, Chairman of 2002 Policy Commission on Future of Farming and Food – key points:

Lord Curry set the scene by revisiting what we know about the Brexit process highlighting in particular the 30% of EU legislation that will not be covered by the Great Repeal Bill. He expressed concern about the lack of prominence of agriculture, food and rural affairs in Brexit deliberations and the need to raise the profile of this industry given the threat to farm incomes, the farmed landscape and our environment. He highlighted the following areas of particular concern:

Funding:

- Many farmers are deeply concerned about losing support.
- Vital to use term support not subsidy – reflects needs for public justification.
- Income foregone not a good basis for calculating support if no market exists.

- Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) unlikely to continue but challenge is to ensure similar level of support and to find ways of ensuring what farmers do is recognised through support, particularly for vulnerable areas.
- Cross-compliance is not just about conforming to existing regulations. GAEC and SMRs not embedded in legislation and so not clear how we retain these vital elements once BPS goes.
- Need to ensure LEPs retain rural focus.

Regulation

- Need to do more to reduce frequency and complexity of inspections.
- Scope to reduce regulation influenced by need to retain animal welfare, food standards, health & safety, biodiversity and consumer confidence.
- EU membership improved our standards – need to keep progress made.
- Oversight needs to be repatriated to ensure compliance and discipline. Parliament will need to expand the remit of existing regulators.

Migration

- Important factor in Brexit.
- Need for new SAW Scheme.

Trade

- Massive challenge to sort trade arrangements in 2 years – transitional arrangement will be required.
- Import tariffs going to be a huge issue. Very relevant to livestock farmers and sheep farmers in particular.
- Free trade or WTO terms – getting our trade deals right is more important than debate on support. But will have to talk about support before we know trade terms.

Policy

- Need a combined agriculture and environment plan – not two separate plans as this just exacerbates the conflict between farming and environmental groups.
- Need to engage with contributors rather than impose policy to ensure ownership.
- Designing own policy gives opportunity to look broader than just farming, food and environment and to consider, for example, relationship with trade, developing countries and health policy.

Presentation by Teresa Dent, Chief Executive of The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust – key points:

Teresa Dent commenced by outlining the Trust's experiences of combining food production and environment enhancement. She then raised the following about designing any future agri-environment policy:

- Need to be realistic about farm profitability – Basic Payment Scheme important contributor.
- Cross compliance measures (GAECs and SMRs) deliver public goods – how are these to be delivered in future?

- The need to increase the scale from farm to landscape. This has been achieved through the Farmer Cluster initiative (invented by GWCT) which is farmer-led. The Lawton report in practice. Can scale up to Super-clusters.
- Need more scope to design schemes and include other innovative management – not just habitat.
- Farmland conservation is 50% ecology and 50% psychology – the latter we don't understand enough yet. Need to understand motive before we try and design incentives. Motive is 'why' someone does something; incentive is simply 'more'. If we don't understand the 'why', incentives will not necessarily achieve the right outcomes.

Q&A session – key points:

Ben Webster (The Times) questioned whether the basic cross-compliance standards should be translated into law if farmers no longer paid to do them? Lord Curry responded by suggesting that a basic environment scheme might cover the cross-compliance aspects (GAECs and SMRs). Teresa Dent agreed there was a very strong case for continuing a basic level of support to underpin existing cross-compliance and that this would be better than regulation.

Gareth Morgan (RSPB) expressed concern about Treasury's focus on costings, Department of International Trade's focus on cheap food and questioned whether there was any desire within DEFRA for change.

Andrew Davis (CRAF) raised the concern about how to incorporate natural capital in future policy.

Baroness Masham (House of Lords) raised the issue of the status of tenants who use BPS for rent and the impact on farm viability, families and rural communities. Lord Curry responded by emphasising the need to find a better way of justifying support and to consider coherent policies.

Philip Clarke (Farmer's Weekly) questioned the speed with which we can move from a CAP based to British agri-policy. Lord Curry reiterated his point about the need for a period of transition (5 years) to effect the policy change.

Chairman's round-up:

Angela Smith MP raised concerns about the legislative process required to effect the policy changes and in particular the 30% of legislation not covered by the Great Repeal Bill which would require lots of Statutory Instruments and a great deal of Parliamentary time. There is therefore a risk that these key components could be lost. She also expressed concern that the impact of Brexit on rural affairs/agriculture and the environment had not been fully taken on board by Parliament.