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CAROLYN MARIE ALCORN

To date, financial support for farming has failed to provide a countryside that is rich in nature.

I would like the protection and restoration of the environment to be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland. Our countryside is reliant on a healthy and vibrant rural economy with farming playing a central role; to achieve this, a new agriculture policy must have environmental protection and restoration at its core.

It's important to me that farmers and land managers are supported and rewarded for farming practices that work with nature. I would love to see a countryside that is filled with wildlife, producing sustainable and healthy food, and allows me to experience the natural world.

To achieve this, the new policy must:

- Include more financial support to help protect nature and wildlife
- Ensure that funding enables farmers and land managers to deliver a range of environmental benefits

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature.

In particular, I would like to see a complete ban on toxic chemicals entering our soil, water and atmosphere. The major problem in this regard is "Round-up", which is killing bees all over the world, preventing pollination of many important foodstuffs, like the apples in Armagh. It is also coming to the fore that our vegetables and fruits are absorbing these toxins, and then in turn, causing toxicity in human health..... I am extremely concerned about our future generations not having healthy foodstuffs.

I would want to support more truly ORGANIC farming, and less 'forced' farming, particularly in the dairy industry.

KATHLEEN ASPIN

How many times have we read of farm runoff contaminating rivers and streams? If NI wants to promote itself as a tourist destination, it cannot continue to ignore the environmental damage done by intensive agriculture.

Instead, it must pursue a vision of a farming system with many domestic stakeholders, not just meat eaters in China and other export markets.

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DAVID BENTLEY

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I don't know the ins and outs of Northern Ireland's policies to date. However I would urge you not to make the mistake that has been spoiling farming and wildlife policy in England. In England the various rules don't apply to Protected Species or any locally designated wildlife site. They apply only to SSSI. The various cross-compliance documents were written by people who didn't know or care. An official compliant didn't even get a response. So please look at all forms of protection and ensure they are included in your legislation.

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature.

ALISTAIR BINGHAM

It is imperative that future financial support for farming provides effective incentives to help sustain a countryside that is rich in biodiversity.

The protection and restoration of the environment must be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland. Our countryside is reliant on a healthy and vibrant rural economy with farming playing a central role; to achieve this, a new agriculture policy must have environmental protection and restoration at its core.

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DARRYL COLLINS

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It's important to me that farmers and land managers are supported and rewarded for farming practices that work with nature. I would love to see a countryside that is filled with wildlife, producing sustainable and healthy food, and allows me to experience the natural world.

In addition, any revised agricultural payments framework should encourage greenway development under access to the countryside aims and the greening of land opportunities. Revising the subsidy framework to include the concept of 'public money for public goods' can prompt new uses of land to benefit the wider public. This can start with creating a system of payments which reward the creation of new public pathways across private land. This would recognise the need for partnership working between landowners, the local community, councils and government to identify strategic route objectives, standards of design and ongoing operation.

To achieve this, the new policy must:

- Include more financial support to help protect nature and wildlife
- Ensure that funding enables farmers and land managers to deliver a range of environmental benefits
- Creating a system of payments which reward the creation of new public pathways across private land
- Revising the subsidy framework to include the concept of 'public money for public goods'

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature.

RACHAEL CONWAY

To date, financial support for farming has failed to provide a countryside that is rich in nature.

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Please support wildlife tourism and introduce initiatives and financial support for farmers to develop this industry on their land.

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature.

ALICE GROOM

Financial support for farming has failed to protect and restore our natural environment, including the natural assets on which the resilience of future farming depends.

I would like the protection and restoration of the natural environment to be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland. This is the best way to support a healthy and vibrant rural economy.

It's important to me that farmers and land managers are supported and rewarded for farming practices that work with nature. I would love to see a countryside that is filled with wildlife, producing sustainable and healthy food, and allows me to experience the natural world.

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STEPHEN HANNA

To date, financial support for farming has failed to provide a countryside that is rich in nature.

I would like the protection and restoration of the environment to be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland. Our countryside is reliant on a healthy and vibrant rural economy with farming playing a central role; to achieve this, a new agriculture policy must have environmental protection and restoration at its core. I also believe that a future agricultural policy for Northern Ireland should aspire to be multifunctional delivering benefits such as the promotion of good mental health, through well supported social farming projects that are common in Europe and gathering support in the Republic of Ireland.

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ALISTAIR HENRY

To date, financial support for farming has failed to provide a countryside that is rich in nature. DAERA needs to work with the Farmer, not against him by imposing unworkable rules from the E.U.

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To achieve this, the new policy must:

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Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature. Remember no matter who you are, every time you eat something, a Farmer most likely grew it.

LINDSAY HODGES

This letter is not just a standard call for action. It has suggestions, examples, ideas and options for the Department to take on board and create new policy for the benefit of all.

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This is not just a hope-filled aspiration. It is achievable and already happening in Northern Ireland where people and organisations have the courage to try. Look at the wildflower meadow just planted at Mountstewart. Look at the recent wildflower project at Cambridge House school in Ballymena that resulted in the growth of incredibly rare new orchids. Or the encouraging new statistics about the elusive Corncrake, almost on the edge of extinction due to over-aggressive farming methods. A few small changes in plough timing and softening of approach has resulted in a very slight increase in the number of birds heard and seen this year. But is it just a one-off or does the Department have the will to make a difference. Already the Curlew is facing the same fate and will be lost without concerted efforts to save it.

We need Departments to work together, where environment and agriculture become bedded together in the drive for conservation. Northern Ireland IS a Wildlife rich country and there IS both the interest and value in making it a viable place for eco-tourism, one of the fastest areas of holiday growth in the market. departments and farmers are missing a trick by simply repeating age-old practices. The opportunity is there to do things differently - but farmers need the incentive to try. More schemes that encourage later crop cutting, delayed ploughing, a complete ban on hedgerow and verge cutting in the breeding season, more areas of land and fields given over to wildflower growth or margins in fields left solely for wildlife - these are only a few of the options open to the Department in creating an agri-economy with its roots in conservation.

You have only to look at the example of Hope Farm in Cambridgeshire, a sustainable farming project run in conjunction with the RSPB. Not only have farmers found a more profitable way to run their business, but the increase in Birdlife and butterfly species has been in the region of 200% with no adverse impacts, only an environment that meets everyone's needs and creates a habitat rich in diversity.

Please work together with Departments whose focus is on the environment and also the wellbeing of all who live here. We need a joined-up approach to agriculture that works to save our precious habitats, nurture our wildlife, provide farmers with a sustainable living and offer those who live here with a healthier, happier place to live in and to be proud of. Such joined-up thinking is long overdue. Farmers will overcome any resistance to change if the incentives, the policy and the will is there to make a positive and sustainable difference.

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature. Don't turn away from the possibility of a better future. It is not just something to dream of. It is something that can and must be achieved.

RHYS JONES

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I also believe the government must implement much harsher financial punishments upon those land owners who fail to care for or recklessly pollute the land and its ecosystems.

MICHAEL MARTIN

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Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature. Please help farmers to protect our built and environmental heritage by offering incentives for preservation and habitat enhancement

STEPHEN JAMES MARTIN

The new Post Brexit farming policy must:

- Include more financial support to help protect nature and wildlife
- Ensure that funding enables farmers and land managers to deliver a range of environmental benefits
- Particularly reward landowners who encourage and secure our most endangered species of plants and animals

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature.

KATHLEEN ELLEN MCALLISTER

I would love to live in a country which is full of wildlife. I believe this would make for happier, healthier and, therefore, better citizens.

To date, financial support for farming has failed to provide a countryside that is rich in nature.

I would like the protection and restoration of the environment to be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland. We have the opportunity now to put in place legislation which will create countryside which not only contains a healthy rural economy, with farming playing a central role, but also puts environmental protection and restoration at its core.

My old geography teacher once said, "Ireland should do what it does best - grow grass". We can grow great grass here - silage and hay. It's important that farmers and land managers are supported and rewarded for farming practices that work with nature. I would love to see a countryside that is filled with wildlife, while also producing sustainable and healthy food, and allowing me and children coming after me to easily experience the natural world.

To achieve this, the new policy must:

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Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Through such policy we can create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature.

PHILIP MCERLEAN

I dislike mass email campaigns but do support the intent of the current campaign regarding post-Brexit farming policy in NI.

Personally I would like to see measures (financial, legislative or other) to

- reduce use of herbicides and pesticides
- allow field margins (and lane/road verges) to grow wild
- control grazing in upland heath/moorland
- educate farmers/land managers about nature conservation
- encourage farmers/land managers to co-operate with each other in managing land for wildlife
- publicise and give awards for the outcome of conservation projects

This is a real opportunity to do something positive in NI agriculture.

DAITHA MCKAY

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I would also like to see land managers given an incentive to work with councils and other stakeholders to provide public access to the countryside, especially in relation

to greenways. The development of a greenway network has the potential to have a huge impact on public health and make our tourism product much richer. Our farmers and land managers hold the key to making this a reality and therefore greenway should be included within a new agricultural policy.

DEIRDRE MCMANUS

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It's important to me that farmers and land managers are supported and rewarded for farming practices that work with nature. I would love to see a countryside that is filled with wildlife, producing sustainable and healthy food, and allows me to experience the natural world. This is also a great source of fun, learning, education and experience for children. Helping them to become positive eco warriors caring for our eco system.

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MELISSA MCQUITTY

Below is the collective response I fully support and I want to add that our country's biggest resource is its natural beauty. Please support the carers of our land to ensure a sustainable and nature first approach to agricultural activity in NI.

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MICHAEL MEHARG

To date, financial support for farming has failed to provide a countryside that is rich in nature. Past agri-environment schemes have been broad brush and only recently have focused group schemes been trialed.

I would like the protection and restoration of the environment to be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland. Our countryside is reliant on a healthy and vibrant rural economy with farming playing a central role; to achieve this, a new agriculture policy must have environmental protection and restoration at its core. Resilient and sustainable farming will need support equal to support levels across Europe if NI is to sustain an agricultural economy on a level plane. Within this new mechanism focused support on the very best nature and wildlife sites is crucial to protect these special places.

Healthy food is produced from healthy animals thriving in a natural and resilient farming system. Intensive systems always require high inputs which cause problems for animal welfare, for food quality and for the environment.

To achieve this, the new policy must:

- Include more financial support to help protect nature and wildlife on both broad approaches and on focused High Nature Value areas
- Ensure that funding enables farmers and land managers to deliver a range of environmental benefits

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature.

IAN MORRIS

I would like the protection and restoration of the environment to be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland. NI is reliant on a healthy and vibrant rural economy with farming playing a central role.

It's important that rural communities are supported, and rewarded, for farming practices that work with nature.

To achieve this, the new policy must:

- Include substantial financial support to help protect nature and wildlife
- Ensure that funding enables farmers and land managers to deliver a range of environmental as well as rural economy benefits.

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment and a healthy rural economy.

MELANIE O'HALLORAN-GOMES

To date, financial support for farming has failed to provide a countryside that is rich in nature. It has also failed to protect us as a family from the pesticides and herbicides that have been sprayed around our home. So close at times it reaches my sisters front door (organochloride for broadleaf - docks). These are cytotoxic, genetically damaging and carcinogens and should not be sprayed anywhere near homes especially where young children can be playing.

I would like the protection and restoration of the environment to be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland. Our countryside is reliant on a healthy and vibrant rural economy with farming playing a central role; to achieve this, a new agriculture policy must have environmental protection and restoration at its core. Organic farming is the future if we want to create a world free from cancer as an example.

It's important to me that farmers and land managers are supported and rewarded for farming practices that work with nature. I would love to see a countryside that is filled with wildlife, producing ecologically sustainable and healthy food, and allows me to experience the natural world as well as know that I am not going to get poisoned any time I walk beside an agricultural field.

To achieve this, the new policy must:

- Include more financial support to help protect nature and wildlife
- Ensure that funding enables farmers and land managers to deliver a range of environmental benefits including helping farmers to realise how dangerous these chemicals are (please refer to Silent Spring by Rachel Carson) so we do not have history repeat itself

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature.

DENNIS REYNOLDS

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I am surrounded by farms which appear to do nothing to protect and encourage wildlife and which rely heavily on artificial fertilisers to maintain fertility. There must be a mechanism to ensure that those who try to maintain such a regime in the future are penalised financially. Letting them drift along without change would be unfair to those who are making genuine efforts.

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature.

KAREN SHEIL

To date, financial support for farming has failed to provide a countryside that is rich in nature. I have been supporting sixth form students over the last 6 years from Down High carrying out Nuffield Science research projects on farms outside Downpatrick. The experimental agri-environment farm continued to carry on farming for the environment after the first tranche of NICMS funding ended, maintained the options in the interim until the new EFS funding was secured. The students have witnessed a diverse range of pollinators including over 100 near threatened *Bombus Lapidarius* and become passionate advocates for their survival. My wish is that their children and grandchildren will also witness these species.

I would like the protection and restoration of the environment to be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland. Our countryside is reliant on a healthy and vibrant rural economy with farming playing a central role; to achieve this, a new agriculture policy must have environmental protection and restoration at its core.

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I have mentored Nuffield science research students measuring highly visual indicator spevirs of pollinators on Co Down farms. In 2017 there was three times the abundance of pollinators on the agri-environment managed farm than on the

neighbouring control farm which has never included any environment farming options as part of its farm management plan. During the climatically challenging conditions of 2018 the agri-environment farm supported four times the abundance offering floral resources throughout the whole life cycles. The next generation deserves sustainably produced food only possible through farms that work with wildlife.

BEN SMITH

I would like the protection and restoration of the environment to be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland.

I would love to see a countryside that is filled with wildlife, producing sustainable and healthy food, and allows me to experience the natural world.

I also strongly support the NI Greenways project, and believe that the Department should be on board with the idea of creating a national cycling/walking network. The benefits to the health and wellbeing of our own population, the potential to attract sustainable tourism and the potential for reduction in car journeys cannot be overlooked.

MICHAEL STEPHENSON

To date, financial support for farming has failed to provide a countryside that is rich in nature, with 64% of the EU's CAP payments going to only 20% of farmers due to the unbalanced system used.

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VIVIENNE WALKER

To date, financial support for farming has failed to provide a countryside that is rich in nature or educate the public about the important role that farming plays in the provision of safe food or in the environment.

I would like the protection and restoration of the environment to be the central focus of a new agriculture policy post-Brexit in Northern Ireland. Our countryside is reliant on a healthy and vibrant rural economy with farming playing a central role; to achieve this, a new agriculture policy must have environmental protection and restoration at its core with informed support for rural communities and the well being of the general public.

It's important to me that farmers and land managers are supported and rewarded for farming practices that work with nature and ensure sustainability in infrastructure rather than an over emphasis on pesticides and fertilizers. I would love to see a countryside that is filled with wildlife, producing sustainable and healthy food, and allows me to experience the natural world.

To achieve this, the new policy must:

- Include more financial support to help protect nature and wildlife
- Ensure that funding enables farmers and land managers to deliver a range of environmental benefits

Please ensure the policy recognises that the future of agriculture is dependent on a healthy natural environment. Only then can we create a sustainable food and farming system that works for people and nature.