



Making the most of our Countryside



The CLA Manifesto for the Rural Economy 2009



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FOREWORD

This Manifesto is the CLA's call to action to all those who hope to form the next Government.

Its contents are not just of great importance to the CLA's 35,000-strong membership – who own and manage more than half of the rural land in England and Wales – but to anyone who eats, and everyone who values the environment and the British countryside.

Our Manifesto deals with goods and services that land managers deliver and are core to the future of life in Britain: putting food on our tables, safeguarding our environment, tackling global warming.

We discuss the issues under three themes: Enabling Rural Business, Caring for the Countryside, and Enjoying our Countryside. They broadly align with the economic, environmental and social pillars of sustainable development. These are key elements of the CLA's vision for Food and Environmental Security around which we have structured this Manifesto.

Producing food must remain the first function of the countryside. The growing world population and, we expect, expanding world economy will put huge pressure on food production. This pressure is certain to increase with the impact of climate change which, in turn, will show up as increased demands on agricultural land and water resources.

Food security is essential and means protecting food production capacity – the farmed land and the knowledge, skills and commitment of those who own, manage and work it. This in turn requires stable remunerative conditions for farmers. That is the only way they will feel confident enough to invest in the future development of their businesses and attract young men and women into agriculture.



But food security alone is not enough. The state of the environment depends on how we farm, and farming depends on environmental security.

While we might expect markets to guide food production, these markets fail when it comes to the provision of environmental and cultural landscape services. We believe it is essential to find the right mix of public payments for the environmental services that land managers provide while creating environmental markets to attract private money into, for instance, carbon and flood protection.

Government policies must embrace Food and Environmental Security.

This is the CLA's over-arching policy. It states how we think the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) should be shaped after 2013, and promotes a wide range of other EU and national policies which have a crucial impact on the rural economy, environment and society.

The CLA calls on the next Government to recognise and support the role land managers play in rural Britain and the rural economy. Working together we can make the most of our countryside.



Henry Aubrey-Fletcher
President, CLA



William Worsley
Deputy President, CLA

1. ENABLING RURAL BUSINESS

The CLA's members own and manage a vast array of different types of businesses in the countryside. Our prime interests are of course in agriculture and forestry, but around these core land-based activities is a huge range of other income and wealth generating activities that create employment. It is in our interest, and in the interest of the nation too, if these businesses are profitable and thriving. For this to happen, appropriate policies are needed at national, regional and local level. In this CLA Manifesto, the common themes affecting rural business are: proportionality, evidence-based regulation, and the use of voluntary approaches and incentives to land managers to supply public environmental services where markets commonly fail.

1.1 Food and Farming

The key policy affecting farming is the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CLA is proposing a twin track policy for Food and Environmental Security as the next phase in the evolution of the CAP¹. This would mean continuing to adapt policy along the lines it has been moving for the last decade giving greater emphasis to market orientation for food and other products, and public payments for the non-market environmental and cultural landscape services. The biggest political challenge is to make the case for sufficient funding for this policy for the next financial perspective 2014 – 20. We believe that the food and environmental challenges will be made tougher by climate change and society's demands for higher environmental and animal welfare standards.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- help secure a European Budget for the next financial perspective which is commensurate with the challenges it faces;
- negotiate better principles of financing the CAP which will resolve the UK's low share of core rural development funds;
- ensure that UK and more specifically English and Welsh implementation of the CAP does not put our farmers at a competitive disadvantage to farmers in the rest of the EU;

- recognise that the challenges farmers face mean they need continued help in managing volatility and increased investment in research and development and technology transfer;
- implement the recommendations of the Competition Commission to create a fairer code of practice in the food supply chain and appoint an Ombudsman to ensure the operation of this code;
- recognise that increasing the burden of regulation is generally less effective than applying a voluntary approach.

1.2 Animal Health and Welfare

The CLA believes the livestock industry plays an essential part in maintaining food security in England and Wales. Grazing livestock also has an important role in supporting eco-systems. However, to remain competitive, tighter border measures are needed to keep out exotic disease, and proactive measures to maintain the highest standards of animal health and welfare should be taken based on practical and scientifically sound policies.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- work with the industry to produce and implement a plan to eradicate Bovine TB combining both cattle and badger controls;

- create a new, independent body made up of industry and government to take responsibility for all decisions relating to the prevention and control of farm animal disease and related farm animal welfare matters;
- recognise the high welfare standards of English and Welsh livestock farmers and accept that domestic regulation must not prevent livestock production from being economically viable;
- protect the existence of small and medium-sized abattoirs as an essential part of a sustainable food chain.

1.3 Farm Tenancy Reform

Secure property rights underpin investment in land and the wide benefits that flow from a healthy tenanted sector. The industry works best with freedom of contract.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- respect the rights of those who own property;
- only act with the unanimous support of the industry through the Tenancy Reform Industry Group (TRIG);
- encourage best practice through joint guidance rather than legislation;
- support the Fresh Start initiative to help new entrants to farming and rural enterprise.

1.4 Forestry and Woodlands

Our forests and woodlands are an essential part of the British countryside. They contribute to the rural economy and climate change mitigation through the production of timber and biomass, to biodiversity through the provision of habitat for woodland flora and fauna and to our general well-being through their enhancement of the landscape and the provision of recreational activities. With the right support, they could do even more.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- encourage a vibrant market in domestic timber by promoting use of more timber in development projects;



- boost the woodfuel market by providing cohesive support for the installation of boilers and the woodfuel supply chain;
- invigorate new planting and productive woodland management by supporting and facilitating a market for carbon credits in UK forestry projects;
- reassess the regulations governing forestry and woodland management which are at present concerned with curbing excessive cutting and deforestation, when the greatest threat to woodland productivity and biodiversity is a lack of management;
- encourage regular inventories of standing volumes of timber;
- recognise the role that country pursuits, such as shooting, play in the financial success of woodland as well as the overall conservation of forestry and woodlands;
- support the management of the grey squirrel and deer populations, two of the greatest threats to the nation's woodlands.

1. This is spelt out in the document *The 21st Century Land Use Challenge*, published by the European Landowners' Organization, June 2008.

1.5 Renewable Energy

The need to find alternative forms of energy to replace fossil fuel is undisputed. They not only provide a way to reduce the impact of climate change but also create opportunities for investment in the countryside.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- promote the use of anaerobic digestion over incineration or composting in waste policy;
- maintain grant aid support under the Bio-Energy Capital Grants Scheme, the Low Carbon Building Programme and the Energy Crops Scheme;
- create easier and cheaper connections to the grid for small-scale producers of renewable energy (those under five megawatts);
- allow developers to choose between the proposed Feed-in Tariff and renewable obligation support when tariffs are introduced;
- maintain fiscal reliefs through the existing capital allowance schemes;
- introduce the proposed Renewable Heat Incentive and Feed-In Tariff for electricity provided in the Energy Act 2008 in a user-friendly form as soon as possible.



1.6 Planning, Heritage and Compulsory Purchase

The planning system should be reformed to achieve a positive, flexible, transparent and efficient regulatory instrument that works well for both rural businesses and communities, and adapts to the demands of changing land use.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- take a balanced approach to sustainable development embracing the needs of the economy, the community and the environment;
- accept that economic activity and associated development of appropriate scale and design is essential in the countryside;
- ensure the planning system is proportionate and easy to understand;
- reduce obstacles to sustainable development especially planning conditions and obligations such as the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL);
- develop a heritage protection system that is effective and proportionate and allows properly managed change to safeguard the economic viability and relevance of heritage;
- update compulsory purchase legislation and procedures;
- only use compulsory purchase as a last resort and then only where need and public interest are proven and negotiations have failed;
- ensure claimants receive better terms and are treated fairly by acquiring authorities;
- clarify the Crichel Down rules for the return of land no longer needed by the State.

1.7 Affordable Rural Housing

Landowners play a huge role in providing affordable rural housing – a role that should be recognised by Government. Increasing employment in rural areas is creating yet more demand for affordable rural housing. Currently the planning system is not allowing its delivery.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- recognise the costs incurred by private landowners in providing land or a building for affordable rural housing;
- give landowners who provide affordable housing the right to nominate tenants;
- allow landowners who provide affordable housing to retain an interest in or income from that housing or the land;
- permit landowners who build affordable rural housing in their community to manage it if they so wish;
- allow cross-subsidy on Rural Exception Sites (RES) if the need for it is expressed within the parish vision, or to permit a combination of both market value and affordable housing;
- provide grant aid to private landowners who supply land or affordable rural housing, as is successfully happening in Scotland;
- introduce tax incentives for private landowners who provide land or affordable rural housing.

1.8 Business Rates

Rural businesses pay rates on the same basis as urban businesses, even though in many cases they receive poorer services than their urban counterparts. Moreover, the burden of business rates is disproportionate on smaller businesses and discourages investment in renewables.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- reverse the recent abolition of the partial exemption available in respect of empty commercial property;
- maintain and enhance small business rate relief;
- introduce new reliefs for small-scale renewables (under five megawatts).

1.9 Rural Broadband Provision

It is essential that rural areas do not lag behind in the availability of modern communications technology. Universal broadband provision is vital for rural businesses. Slow or no broadband hinders commercial and social opportunities in rural areas.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- create business opportunities in rural areas by putting in place a 10-year project to install a comprehensive fibre-optic network for everyone;
- increase the Universal Service Commitment speed for broadband from two megabits per second to at least five megabits per second by 2012;
- launch a public-private partnership using a national loan guarantee to ensure adequate infrastructure investment over a 10-year period;
- promote a broadband piggy-backing model that allows rural business and communities to benefit from under-capacity public sector broadband.

2. CARING FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

The majority of the English and Welsh countryside is managed by farmers and foresters. The huge recreation and tourism industry which it supports testifies to its beauty and popularity. However it also suffers from market failure: society wants beautiful landscape, biodiversity in and around our fields and forests, pure water and clean air, but currently insufficient ways exist to reward farmers and foresters for the eco-system services they provide. Landowners recognise they must work with Government and other partners to find ways to balance food production and environmental care.

2.1 Environmental Stewardship

Generations of rural land managers have stewarded the landscapes and habitats we all enjoy and which society wants to safeguard. However, as agricultural supports diminish and the demand for food and energy rises, further pressure is placed on the environment. Consequently, the cost of providing these public environmental services will rise. It is vital that the appropriate scale and range of policy measures is created to provide the level of care for the countryside that society demands.



The CLA calls on Government to:

- work with the farming industry and its green partners to scope the scale of environmental provision society demands and the policies and budgets necessary to meet these demands;
- prepare the ground for the re-scaling of environmental stewardship programmes as the CAP is further reformed and as agricultural markets change;
- set up an appropriate forum to investigate how to take forward the creation of environmental markets as proposed in the recent CLA paper, *Private Solutions to Public Problems – Developing Environmental Markets*;
- ensure the Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE) is given sufficient time and resources to work;
- make agri-environment schemes such as Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship accessible, tailored at the farm level and able to deliver against a range of environmental objectives;
- provide more rewarding conditions for the upland and Less Favoured Areas (LFA) so they can continue to provide landscape, biodiversity, water management and carbon management services which underpin more viable businesses bolstering rural communities.

2.2 Climate Change

The CLA recognises the threat of uncontrolled global climate change to its core food production and environmental care roles. We are in favour of collective action to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. The CLA is concerned that in its eagerness to be in the lead on climate change Government should not export UK agricultural emissions by imposing unachievable reduction targets for nitrous oxide and methane.

The CLA has developed an online calculator, CALM (Carbon Accounts for Land Managers)², to encourage emission reductions. But we are adamant that land managers' role in sequestering carbon in soil and in trees and in energy and material substitution must be part of UK climate policy.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- support a comprehensive global agreement with quantified cuts to keep temperature increase to less than two degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels. Commitments on deforestation and land use change in developing countries should be included to enable land management to make the optimal contribution to climate change mitigation;
- encourage investment by farms and estates in climate adaptation and mitigation measures;
- promote CALM as the standard tool for assessing the GHG balance of land-based activity;
- ensure that additional domestic carbon capture in soils and trees can be fully integrated into carbon trading schemes;
- conduct the necessary UK-based measurement to improve our knowledge of agricultural emissions, and then refine the UK national GHG inventory so that it more accurately reflects emissions from agriculture and the impact of changes in land management;
- ensure that planning and building guidance emphasise the carbon savings that can be achieved through material substitution;

2. www.cla.org.uk/calm

- promote the incorporation of climate change options into agri-environment schemes;
- support necessary research and development to find the crop and livestock production techniques which could achieve the radical emission reductions required;
- assist the knowledge transfer process and necessary investment required to get new techniques adopted.

2.3 Flood and Coastal Defence

The majority of the UK's best soils are less than five metres above the mean high water level. Protecting this land should be a strategic objective of Government policy for food security. It may be uneconomic for the public authorities to maintain defences to the extent they have done in the past. However, land should not be surrendered to water unless there are no other options. Alternative solutions to coastal defence should be investigated and implemented wherever possible.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- use defences based on active management of natural processes and soft engineering techniques;
- manage realignment of coasts and riverine washlands under voluntary agreements with landowners as part of a sustainable flood defence programme;
- review the financial commitment to fluvial and coastal management with a separate budget for coastal works;
- allow landowners to maintain defences with planning consent where appropriate;
- review the formulae and discount rates used for calculating costs and benefits so they take into account the integral value of rural communities, the full market value of agricultural land and architectural heritage, and the need for Food and Environmental Security.

2.4 Water Quality

Water quality has been steadily improving in England and Wales. This is clear from the fall in the number of serious pollution incidents and increase in the length of rivers in favourable condition. However, more remains to be done to achieve the ambitions of the Nitrates and Water Framework Directives. We believe that pollution control measures would be more effective if there was a clear scientific and economic case made for the quality standards imposed.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- implement the principles laid down in the Water Framework Directive particularly that measures should be imposed across all sectors even-handedly according to rigorous assessment of the cost effectiveness of the measures, and ensuring that costs are not disproportionate;
- allow time for the impact of recently introduced land use policies and measures to be established and assessed;
- involve land managers at all stages of the implementation of the Water Framework Directive;
- use incentives rather than regulation to encourage land use change where it is necessary to deal with some aspects of diffuse pollution of water.

2.5 Water Resource

Water is expected to become a more critical factor in maintaining agricultural production, especially on some of the country's most productive fruit, vegetable and arable land. Land managers should be encouraged to maximise their efficiency of water capture and use by using water more effectively, storing it in reservoirs and working with natural cycles to increase groundwater supplies and reduce flooding. With the correct holistic policy framework land managers can be supported and rewarded for delivering and managing sustainable water resources.



The CLA calls on Government to:

- ensure that the “environmental allocation” of water is based on sound science;
- compel Government agencies to work in partnership with rural businesses so the impact of their activities on economic concerns are taken into account;
- encourage the efficient use of water in agriculture;
- support sustainable water supplies by promoting reservoirs on farms, particularly by deregulating their use when there is no significant risk to public safety;
- encourage land managers to work with water's natural cycle by updating the water abstraction rules and take advantage of high flows for storage by more flexible use of the licensing system.

3. ENJOYING OUR COUNTRYSIDE

Our countryside is a national treasure and a cultural landscape. Few can walk the moors, visit the wetlands, stroll the woodlands or coastline without being struck by how special rural England and Wales is. However, it is also a place of work, wildlife habitats, and the centre of British food production. Enjoyment of the countryside must recognise these needs.

3.1 Modernising Public Rights of Way

Nearly 10,000 miles of public paths already exist in England alone. However, the public rights of way network is not fit for purpose for the 21st Century as it fails to take account of landowners' needs and the increasing recreational needs of the public. A modern, flexible network would provide a “net gain” for the benefit of all.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- create flexibility in the rights of way process to simplify the cumbersome process of modification;
- allow landowners to apply for a diversion or extinguishment of a right of way;
- ensure that routes take account of modern needs – for example, by avoiding farmyards, gardens or dangerous hazards;
- have a network which is easy to follow, well signed, waymarked and maintained;
- commit to implement the 2026 cut-off date for recording historic routes on the Definitive Map;
- boost rural business opportunities by linking existing routes with holiday and recreational businesses to create a more comprehensive and enjoyable network.

3.2 Coastal Access

The CLA has been opposed to the Government's proposals for coastal access. We believe the best way to create access is through voluntary measures or using the Highways Act 1980 which properly reimburses landowners for their loss.

While access to the coast can bring benefits to both the public and some coastal rural businesses, these benefits do not necessarily go to those landowners who provide that access.

Whenever access rights are imposed – such as with the England coastal access scheme – the legislation should take full account of landowner and business interests, including environmental and economic concerns.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- ensure that if proposals for improved coastal access are implemented, they take full account of the impact on coastal property and businesses;
- draw on the positive experience of coastal routes, such as the South West Coast Path, to guide work on any new route;
- make planning authorities aware of the flexible nature of the proposed new access, so the planning guidance reflects this to ensure that designation of coastal margin does not serve to stifle business development;
- commit to the principle that any coastal access proposals should not adversely affect the environment, sport, business or the privacy of property owners.



3.3 Shooting

Shooting provides considerable economic, social and environmental benefits. It is therefore important that any controls imposed must be balanced against these considerations.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- recognise that the problem with firearms is their illegal use in crime, not their legal use for sporting and land management;
- remove disproportionate restrictions on the consumption of game meat;
- ensure the Government's Code for Game Rearing does not go beyond what is required to accord with best practice.

3.4 Tourism

Rural tourism plays a vital role in the nation's economy, generating around £16billion per year. The public benefits through being able to enjoy the unique character of the countryside. However, rural tourism businesses are sometimes hampered by stifling regulation, inappropriate tax rules which discourage investment in tourist accommodation, and a planning system that destroys entrepreneurial spirit.

The CLA calls on Government to:

- revise the planning system to allow rural tourism providers to diversify into new market areas if there is a demand;
- not to change the income tax and Capital Gains Tax rules for providers of tourist accommodation in Furnished Holiday Lettings;
- adopt a common sense approach to health and safety legislation;
- provide sufficient funding for the provision of tourist information offices in rural areas;
- develop clear guidance for practical and effective tourism signage.

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