HOUSE OF LORDS

Land Use in England Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Land use in England

Monday 27 June 2022

3.25 pm

Watch the meeting

Members present: Lord Cameron of Dillington (The Chair); Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville; Lord Curry of Kirkharle; Lord Grantchester; Lord Harlech; The Earl of Leicester; Baroness Mallalieu; Baroness Redfern; Lord Watts; Baroness Young of Old Scone.

Evidence Session No. 18 Heard in Public Questions 190 - 203

Witness

I: Henry Dimbleby, Lead, National Food Strategy.

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Examination of witness

Henry Dimbleby.

Q190 **The Chair:** Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on Land Use in England. We have in front of us Henry Dimbleby, who is the author of *The National Food Strategy* independent review, and he has had access to a list of interests declared by members of the committee. The meeting is being broadcast live via the parliamentary website. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the committee website but you, Henry Dimbleby, will have an opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary.

Thank you very much, Henry, for coming before us. I will go straight into the first question. What assessment would you make of the Government's food strategy? What do you think it gets right and, alternatively, what are the missed opportunities? What is your most desirable missed opportunity, perhaps?

Henry Dimbleby: The Government's food strategy, strictly speaking, is not a strategy in that it is not a holistic explanation of how the Government want to create a food system that can feed us affordably, keep us healthy and maintain and improve the environment. It is actually the third response to my report and we are expecting a response on health coming from DHS, the Department of Health and Social Care, shortly.

There is some good stuff in there. The most important thing, and obviously very relevant to this committee, is the commitment of the Government to produce a land use framework. Without producing a land use framework, it is impossible to set out how we will create the food system that I just described. There is good stuff on data and mandatory reporting, setting out to make more data on health, the environment and land use available publicly. There is some reasonable stuff on innovation and procurement, although it did not go as far as I would like it to.

There are three things missing. Two, I think, are pretty fundamental. The first is that it does not put the transition of our food system on a statutory basis. There are no targets committed to in law and, critically, no independent review of how the Government are getting on in making the transition we need in the food system. I worry that without those things, which, for example, exist with the Climate Change Committee on our climate initiatives, momentum will effectively stall and we will end up, as we have done in the food system over the last 20 years, rethinking it all again.

The second thing that has not been done is that the Government have not dealt with trade. Interestingly, there was a leaked version of the Government's food strategy over the weekend before they published it, and in that they had very substantial and stronger wording on trade and on ensuring that our trading relationships prevented food grown to lower environmental and animal welfare standards being imported into the UK. That was not in the final version.

A smaller thing, but I think important, on public procurement is that they said they would look at accreditation. For me, the key thing on helping schools, hospitals and government offices buy better-produced food is not simply telling them that it all needs to be environmentally friendly and making the standards mandatory. It is about injecting the skills, where accrediting bodies are important. I said that everyone spending government money should have a mandatory accreditation and that was not in there.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That is a very helpful introduction.

Q191 **Lord Harlech:** The committee has heard support for the three-compartment model but also a concern that it is too simplistic to meet real world conditions. What has been the response to the three-compartment model and has your thinking moved on this since your report was published?

Henry Dimbleby: The three-compartment model was a conceptual model of how we should use land. There are debates running about how you produce enough food and restore biodiversity and sequester carbon, and typically there had been two camps. One was the land-sparing model, where you basically doubled down on intensification and produced more food from less land, thereby freeing up land for biodiversity, restoration and carbon sequestration. The other extreme was land sharing, where you basically create an agro-ecological/organic/regenerative approach with much lower or zero inputs and lower food production, lower yields, over all farming land. What we pointed out with the three-compartment model was that there was some wildlife that lived on farms and thrived in a farmed environment, and other wildlife that lived in and preferred a semi-wild environment. Any solution to that equation of how we produce the food, sequester the carbon and restore biodiversity would involve not only land taken out of production but land where you maintain high yields with fewer inputs and then agro-ecological land. Those were the three compartments.

In two ways, there has been some confusion around it. The first is that it is probably more of a continuum. People just assumed that the conceptual model was either deep intensification or regenerative or wild, and I think you will see a continuum of farming approaches, not just the three compartments.

The second thing where there has been some confusion is that people thought that every farm needed to have these three compartments in equal measures. What we were describing, and that will come on to the land use framework, is that we needed to assess our soils and what the capability of our land was across the whole country and then put in place the regulation and the payments that made sure that the landowners of that land used it optimally, whether it was best suited for low yield production, high yield production or to be set aside from production entirely.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I am just thinking about that. The land

sharing seems to have become very much in favour, certainly within this committee and the evidence we have heard, and how having conservation headlands—headlands do not produce much crop anyway—on most farms would be a better solution. I am wondering to what extent your thinking might have changed a little in terms of your three-way division of land in that respect.

Henry Dimbleby: Yes, I think that is right. What is interesting is that if you look at farmers who have improved the data on the profitability of a field and have measured what inputs they are putting on different parts of the field, quite often those borders are unprofitable anyway and they are being taken out of production.

In terms of land sharing, even on the high-yield farms you will be getting nature back. You will be using less pesticides or no pesticides in the future. You will be using less carbon. You will have rougher edges. I think that when people think about land sharing they are thinking about a model that produces maybe 30% lower yield, often in a traditional rotational system with livestock and so on. I do not think you will get that. The Sustainable Food Trust published a land use framework a couple of weeks ago, just after the Government published their strategy, which showed that you could feed the whole country on that agro-ecological land. It had a lot of land turned over to that form of farming. The problem with that for me was, first, it was not carbon-negative, as it needs to be, and secondly, it required very substantial diet change, which I think was unrealistic. However, that is one vision. That land-sharing vision is one that some people have on the future of farming.

Q192 **The Earl of Leicester:** Henry, since your visit to Groundswell last week, have you reappraised your views on the land sharing being maybe 30% to 40%—as I think it says in your report—less productive? Has that advanced to land sharing or agro-ecology or regenerative agriculture being nearly up there with more intensive yields, but obviously using fewer inputs, less diesel, fewer chemicals and so on?

Henry Dimbleby: It depends on what you are talking about. In the report, we talk about farmers who are starting at the high-yield end and reducing inputs. If you look at the Cherry farm, for example, where they have gone to min-till and they have used fewer and fewer inputs, they have maintained their yields, pretty much. There are a lot of people doing that regenerative approach.

When I talk about the 30% reduction, I am talking about a traditional agro-ecological rotation. There are some people who would look at what the Cherrys are doing and say, "You use glyphosate. This is not regenerative farming". If you look at, at the moment, absolutely zero input—traditional rotations of anywhere between three and seven years of pasture between horticulture crops, for example—you do see a 30% reduction. I am quite optimistic that you will get high yields and, over time, the high-yield regenerative farming will require fewer and fewer inputs and maintain the yields.

It is interesting. Even at Groundswell, there are different tribes according to whether you can use glyphosate and so on. I think you will begin to see high-yield stuff that has a different form of nature but has nature on the land.

The Earl of Leicester: Chair, you mentioned in your introduction that this committee is perhaps moving more towards land sharing than the other models, but I would make an argument for the three-compartment model as having a lot of gravitas.

The Chair: It has something going for it, yes.

Q193 **Baroness Redfern:** Mr Dimbleby, you said in response to the Government's food strategy that it does not set out a clear vision and what needs to be done and will not be sufficient to drive a long-term change to what we know is urgently needed. Could you elaborate a little on your comments?

Henry Dimbleby: Yes. If you think about what a strategy is in basic terms, you explain what a healthy body looks like. You say, "This is what a good system would look like" and then you diagnose the patient, the system, and you ask, "Why is it sick? In what way is it sick and what is causing this illness?" Then you apply your prescription. You write what is required to make the patient healthy. In the case of the food system, there are two things that are making it sick. One is the fact that we have not built nature into any of the systems that we use to measure human progress. I call this, using Sir Partha Dasgupta's term, the "invisibility of nature". We need to look at how we create food without destroying nature and releasing a lot of carbon.

The second is that there is this thing that I call the junk food cycle, a toxic feedback loop between the commercial incentives of companies and our evolved appetites, which is making us sick as they market more and more foods to us that are not good for us.

The Government's current approach does not address in full those two issues and the trade-offs that they represent. However, if they do the rural land use framework well on the environment side, they will suddenly reveal quite stark trade-offs in terms of how much meat we can produce, which land, where, whether we need to sequester carbon, and where we need to grow food. I hope that before the Government publish their framework next year a number of independent organisations will commission proper scientific work. If the Government do not duck it, as members of this committee will know, I think it will be the first properly done land use framework in any developed country. It could be fundamental. It could be completely ground-breaking in terms of how we change the system.

Baroness Redfern: It could be improved by 2023, then, is what you are saying.

Henry Dimbleby: Yes. They will not have a strategy on the health side, but if they do the land use framework properly next year, that will look

very much like a strategy. My guess is that it will say that in the east of the country, for example, we want to maintain yields and we are happy to let off a bit of carbon, which we will sequester elsewhere. You will suddenly be dealing with the trade-offs. My guess is that it will also be impossible to solve the equation without reducing the amount of meat we produce and eat.

Q194 **Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Henry, I was pleased to hear you say that you see the three-compartment model as a continuum rather than three compartments. One of the anxieties about your three compartments—I think Dame Fiona Reynolds gave us evidence on this—was that it would discourage people from doing exactly what you have talked about. That is, looking at multifunctionality; looking at how on their landholding they can deliver for all three—food, nature and carbon; and getting the trade-offs right in their own heads, as it were. What would your reaction be to that?

Henry Dimbleby: I think that is right. As I have alluded to with the East Anglia model, the answer is that to some degree all farming will produce a certain amount of food, restore or maintain a certain level of biodiversity and either sequester or emit carbon, and different farms across the country will do that in different ways. Some farms will continue to sequester. Some land will continue to emit carbon while producing food, which will need to be sequestered elsewhere—largely, my guess is, in land that is taken out of production and reforested and with peat restored. I think that is absolutely right.

The other thing in terms of the biodiversity is that you are likely to see different ecosystems restored in different ways. For example, I can imagine the Cherrys at their farm in Hertfordshire, who are now using lots of Roundup, getting to a stage where they are using either nature-based fertiliser or some other form of zero-carbon fertiliser, not using any Roundup but still producing very high yields. They would still have a lot of pure wheat and pure crops in their fields and they would have a certain ecosystem. They would be low carbon, high yield and have a certain form of biodiversity. Then you could imagine another farm, with a traditional agro-ecological rotation, which had a completely different ecosystem. You cannot get dung beetles if you do not have cattle, for example, and then there is a whole ecosystem that lives around that. They would be strong in biodiversity, slightly lower in yields and slightly higher in their carbon footprint.

You will get all these different models and the reason you need a land use framework is that you have to work out across the country how all those things individually add up to a farming system that produces enough food, restores biodiversity and sequesters carbon.

Q195 **Lord Grantchester:** Good afternoon, Henry. In terms of what is important to businesses, especially agriculture as much as any other—that is, the price of food and the pricing structure—have you any ideas about how we can make the price signals reflective of the changes needed? How can we make the cost of nature more visible in the price of

food, which I think is one of your quotes?

Henry Dimbleby: One of the things commonly said about the food system—I was handed lots of reports on this when I started work—was that the costs of the food system are not reflected in the price. Typically, the reports that were available when I arrived suggested that the damage done in the cost to the health service and the damage done to the environment meant that food would cost us twice as much as we paid for it at the checkout. Initially, I was quite sceptical about that. It felt like it was being exaggerated but, digging into the numbers, I think it is probably an understatement, if anything. I do not think that those numbers adequately reflect the damage that the food system is doing to our environment.

That does not necessarily mean that that is the cost that food has to be. It just means that that is the cost of doing farming and agriculture as we are doing it at the moment. The question that we need to ask is how we can direct the power of human ingenuity to creating affordable food that does not have that destructive power. Because of the invisibility of nature and the fact that we are only just beginning to realise the harms of diet, in the past a huge amount of ingenuity has gone into just creating cheap food.

I you look at the transition, it is possible—and we did some work on this in the strategy—to imagine a world where a sustainable diet does not have to be much more expensive. You can shift the way the system produces food so that almost everything except meat—it is quite tricky to see how that does not go up in price—is potentially even cheaper than it is today.

How you get that transition is a political decision. The British economist Arthur Pigou in the early 1920s proposed what are known as Pigouvian taxes, whereby you cost the externalities, add them to the price of food and that is how you change the market. Clearly, if you did that now, you would double the price of food with government intervention. You would have riots. The Government would not stand. However, it does not necessarily need to be like that. If you look at the energy transition, you have a potential model of what that might look like. Solar power now is plummeting in price. It is cheaper already than fossil fuels and chances are it will get so much cheaper that we might have at peak six times the amount of energy we need in the UK so that when it is a dark day we can still have energy at that point. If you had put a tax on the fossil fuel to reflect the harm, again you would have had riots, but instead, by paying subsidies and showing the direction of travel, huge amounts of money have gone into investing in and bringing the cost of solar power down.

There is a way through, with a combination of regulation and payments for public goods, where you could tip the food system into a different mode of operation without it having to go through an enormous price increase. That is quite a long answer to your question and I am not even sure I answered the right question, so please ask it again.

Lord Grantchester: It is a complex jigsaw, as you rightly identify. You use the model of renewable energy, which makes me think of the contracts for difference scheme that was a mechanism for getting that up and running. Does anything like that have any similarities for food production?

Henry Dimbleby: Sorry, what scheme?

Lord Grantchester: Is the contracts for difference scheme—in order to encourage renewable fuels—a model that has application for agriculture?

Henry Dimbleby: That is definitely something that you could put in place. Effectively, the public money for public good is doing a version of that, but you could definitely have that kind of scheme to encourage more sustainable farming.

Q196 **Lord Curry of Kirkharle:** Good afternoon, Henry. It is good to see you. First, I have a comment on your response to the debate on the three-compartment model. Many of us, like me, are trying to farm on a min-till basis for all the reasons, to reduce carbon and to improve organic matter. There is often a conflict between trying to reduce chemical use and delivering those outcomes, because the persistency of weeds means that trying to manage without the use of glyphosate, Roundup, in those systems can be quite difficult, which is why many organic farmers have to resort to ploughing. They have no other way of controlling the weeds. Sometimes it is difficult to deliver all those in one farm system.

However, let me move on to the question. You were encouraged by the Government's response on your recommendations for a rural land use framework. We were encouraged, too, because it has endorsed the importance of this committee. I would be keen to hear from you on what you envisage would be included in a land use framework and how we might reconcile and integrate urban and rural land use issues and what the trade-offs might be that we would have to consider.

Henry Dimbleby: It should be something that is broadly scoped and involves not only Defra but BEIS and DLUHC. It has to be all-consuming. The fundamental issue is that for all human existence we used the sun on the land pretty much to give us everything we needed: food, housing, energy, clothing and building materials. Then we discovered the millions of years of stored sunlight in the form of fossil fuels underground and that basically took a lot of pressure off the land and enabled us to use it just for food. As we cease to use fossil fuels, we will have to suddenly use the land to do all those things again.

We estimated—but it was a rough estimate—that if you wanted to feed people, produce the right number of calories, restore biodiversity and sequester carbon, rather than 70% of the land you farmed today you would farm between 63% and 65%. Still over 53% of England's land would be pasture and maybe 2% to 4% would be taken out of production to become native woodland.

If you look at a lot of the fights going on at the moment, for example, there are continuing campaigns to stop land on good soils being taken out of production for housing. There are problems particularly for people wanting to build greenhouses on the amount of land under option to developers; therefore, they are unable to get planning permission to build greenhouses in areas where they have the right level of sunlight. There are clearly a much broader set of issues than Defra itself can solve. Therefore, we have to have a strategy that not only encompasses nature, carbon and food but also energy—it is interesting to see our Prime Minister's comments on biofuels over the last couple of days—and housing. I am not sure you need to get into fully urban. There is potential in the future for urban food production and so forth but it certainly needs to include suburb, and it needs to include energy and housing in those equations.

Lord Curry of Kirkharle: Do you have a view on the housing issue, Henry? It has cropped up a number of times that we have committed to building 300,000 houses a year. Often this would be on the fringes of towns and cities and it is good agricultural land. What is the solution to that?

Henry Dimbleby: We did not explicitly look at the amount of land that you would need to build those houses, but the built environment is such a small percentage of our total land at the moment. This is what a land use framework should do if it was expanded to housing. I would be quite surprised if the amount of grade 1 or grade 2 land needed to build the houses we need to build significantly affected our food production. I do not know that, but that is my guess, just from looking at how small the housed area is compared to the rural areas. I know that those fights are fought individually and very fiercely, and that is exactly why you need a land use framework—to give a national perspective on that rather than every development on a grade 1 piece of land becoming a huge local fight.

Q197 **Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Henry, you might not be able to tell us but I wonder whether you have had any indications from government about the direction their land use strategy might take. It seemed in the response to your report that it was very much a Defra issues strategy that they were thinking about, rather than the way you have described it as bringing in BEIS, DLUHC, energy, biofuels, housing and other issues. Do you have any insight for us?

Henry Dimbleby: I do not. I have asked to speak to Defra on that topic, the civil servant in charge in that area, and I intend to speak to DLUHC and BEIS. Clearly, we need to address it. The biofuel issue has now become very current, but that is something that needs to be addressed, as are solar, wind farms and housing. I cannot see how you publish a national land use framework that is not dead in the water immediately if it does not address those issues.

Q198 **Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville:** Henry, should we be growing food to suit people's diets or changing our diet to suit what we

grow? Where do you see the balance between growing food to meet demand and promoting dietary changes?

Henry Dimbleby: It is an interesting and very difficult issue. The first thing you have to work out is that there are lots of different potential solutions to the question of what food we could produce that restores biodiversity, sequesters carbon and gives us enough food. Then you have to work out which solution is the easiest to bring about. If you look, for example, at the Sustainable Food Trust's last report, which suggests that we massively reduce—I think halve—the amount of chicken or more than halve the amount of pork we eat and maintain or increase a little the amount of beef because we will be using a lot of beef in those rotations, I think that would be politically very difficult. The beef would be more expensive. You would be taking away cheap meat. It would be very hard to do.

The framework that we proposed was that you could do all those things. You would need to eat about 30% less meat. We were quite careful not to say "less and better" because there is a role for cheaper proteins for people on lower incomes. It was really interesting. In the focus groups that we did and the dialogues we had with citizens, people were much more accepting of the idea of government intervention on health and things like a sugar tax than they were on meat. I think the Government would find it very hard directly to change people's diets there. You would need to look at private initiative—and I know that a lot of companies now have set themselves targets for how they can steer their customers away from meat—combined with innovation and alternative proteins for products such as milk powder. That is dairy, not meat, but there is no reason that, as soon as you can get a milk powder that is an alternative to what goes through a cow, you need to be producing milk powder from a cow.

A combination of innovation and private sector initiatives should be enough to get us to reduce meat by that amount. It may be over time that it becomes easier for government to get involved, but at the moment it is very difficult for government to change our diets in that way.

Q199 **Baroness Redfern:** In your opinion, does the Government's food strategy go far enough to help address key shared objectives in relation to nature, climate change and mitigation? May I also get your comments on whether you think the framework should have reduction targets to support farmers to end reliance on artificial fertilisers and pesticides?

Henry Dimbleby: On the first question of whether it goes far enough, no, I do not think it does. Very specifically, it does not deal with trade. You can see us creating a utopian agricultural system here in the UK and then simply exporting our environmental and animal welfare harms abroad in the form of imported food grown to lower standards. Secondly, without a statutory footing, it will not generate the momentum required.

In terms of getting people off Haber-Bosch fertiliser and whether there should be targets, clearly that has to be a part of our net-zero transition. Again, there will be multiple routes and it might not be that particular incentives or targets are required for that one thing, but Defra definitely should have a view on how it meets its targets, and less fertiliser would be one of those.

Interestingly, from speaking to the farming community about the horrific costs of fertiliser at the moment, created by the Ukrainian war, people who had been very resistant to regenerative farming are beginning to get quite interested in people who are using 30% less fertiliser than them to generate the same yield. You might see more of a drift towards that in the absence of government targets because people have seen a future and we have had a short—I hope—glimpse of what the future might look like. It does not look great if you are reliant on industrial fertilisers.

Q200 **Lord Watts:** Henry, in your experience, how joined-up are the Government when it comes to food, agriculture, land use policy and decision-making? Could you suggest a way that perhaps the Government could improve those things?

Henry Dimbleby: Not very, and I do not think it is uniquely a problem of this Government or this country. One of the things that people said when I asked them what a systems approach should look like was that you need joined-up government. It is the case—I will come on to some of the particular tensions—that you have tensions between government objectives when it comes to the food system.

I do not think that is the root cause of the problem, which, as I said, I think is the junk food cycle and this invisibility of nature, but it makes solving the problem much harder. For example, we have seen on trade clearly a running tussle between the Department for International Trade and Defra about what we say on restricting imports. On the health side, there is constant skirmishing. Often our government departments act as clients and have clients in the industry, so DCMS lobbies very hard against any advertising restrictions. Defra constitutionally has been resistant to getting involved in the health side, whereas the Department of Health and Social Care cannot see any way of keeping the NHS propped up if it does not in some way intervene in the commercial incentives for companies. You have these running battles all the time going on all the time, and those are overlaid by particular ideologies of Ministers in certain departments.

As I said, I do not think that is unique to this Government or to this topic. It may be particularly noticeable in food. You hear of it in the write-arounds when they get White Papers out and bounce them between the departments, and departments passive-aggressively take out sentences and then put them back in and take them out and put them back in until they have to be resolved in No. 10.

Lord Watts: Henry, I am sorry to stop you mid-flight, but I am trying to see if you can give the committee some direction. Wales has the

possibility of an organisation. Scotland has a possible organisation that could deliver. What do you think is needed in England to deliver and to bring all those different bodies together, and to have an overall policy?

Henry Dimbleby: It is interesting that you mention Scotland and Wales. We engaged quite strongly with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales because there are some areas that are not devolved and then other things where we should be doing the same. I had a chance to look at Scotland and Wales quite closely. Wales manages it in part literally spatially. Everyone is in the same building. In a smaller Administration, culturally there is more co-operation. Scotland has passed a statutory Bill—a good food Bill. It has put it into law and has the intention of bringing government departments together over the long term.

My view is that in England you would do two things set out in the report. One is that you would have a good food Bill and you would set out what the Government's goals and objectives were and set targets on food that dealt explicitly with those trade-offs. The second is that, as with the Climate Change Committee, you would get an independent annual review of the Government's work. I suggest that that should be done by the three regulatory bodies—the Office for Environmental Protection on the environmental side, the Food Standards Agency, and the Climate Change Committee. Those three bodies should mark the homework of government based on explicit objectives that government set out in a good food Bill. They have not gone for the good food Bill. They have asked those three bodies to get involved in a report, but they have not said how often it will happen and nor is it statutory. They have not set out how it might happen.

The Chair: Henry, going back to land use and joined-up government in that respect, you are proposing the Government agreeing to having a land use infrastructure commission or land use strategy or however they might like to describe it. Of course, our countryside is so varied—north, south, east, west, mountainous, flat or whatever it might be—so you will have to have some form of local implementation. That is obviously where DLUHC might come into that. How would you see the implementation of whatever it is that this commission decides? It assesses the data. It decides where it wants to nudge us—such as more food and better food, more energy, more land for access, more woodland and so on. How do you actually implement that on the ground? It is an unfair question because it does not really come into your remit.

Henry Dimbleby: It is interesting. I suggest that there should be annual updates for this. Both the science and the available data are developing all the time. It is not the case that you could do a land use framework and then just stop. It might be suddenly the case that solar becomes so cheap that we decide not to do any more wind farms and to just do solar, and so on. That needs to be done regularly by, I suggest, a combination of departments—BEIS, Defra and DLUHC.

In terms of the implementation, centrally, as you say, government has limited levers. It can regulate, it can design payments and it has planning

policy at its disposal. In the same way that you have farmers now increasingly working on a catchment basis to decide how they manage their catchment, I would like to see individual counties or whatever the right unit was building it from the bottom up and it being an iterative thing between them and the top-down thing. I know that in Devon, for example, with the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission—you have no doubt taken evidence from it—and somewhere in East Anglia there are counties trying to work this out.

It is very difficult to pass a law to get people to do things and at a local level you will not be able to define exactly what is required from a top-down perspective to get the best local results. You need to instil it in the culture and with those local landowners. I am not sure exactly what that infrastructure looks like, but it has to be developed on a catchment area basis rather than just handed down from above.

Lord Watts: Henry, you suggested that Wales is perhaps ahead of everyone else because the size of the organisation makes it easy. You say that it brought them all into one building and that that helps. Does there need to be a regional dimension to England and would it be a good idea for multifunction organisations to be set up in the regions to deliver this?

Henry Dimbleby: It clearly will be regional. The part of the world that I know best is Devon—the moors in the middle of it and the very different southern farming from the northern part. What you do there will be very different from what you do in East Anglia, what you do in the Lake District and so on. It needs to be local. On implementation, I have not thought specifically about what agencies would be required, but it is a very good question and we should start thinking about how that plays out once we have a broad understanding of what we need to do where in the country.

The Chair: I suspect that is probably what we should be thinking about. Thank you.

Q201 **Baroness Young of Old Scone:** One of the mechanisms that has been discussed at a local level is the local nature recovery strategies being a quasi-land use process at local level. Certainly, when you talk to Defra about how this might work at local level, Ministers very quickly say that local nature recovery strategies are the answer to working out what happens where. For me, the clue is on the tin, as it were. If they are called local nature recovery strategies, will they be unidimensional? Do you have any views on the use and benefit of local nature recovery strategies as an integrative tool for a large number of stakeholders at a local level?

Henry Dimbleby: I think that local co-operation can be fantastic and a very powerful tool. It is interesting that the Government originally suggested that environmental land management—the replacement for the common agricultural policy—would be split, broadly speaking, three ways between the sustainable farm incentive, local land use recovery and

landscape scale recovery. However, until you have done your land use framework, you have no idea whether that is the right split.

I think that when we get the land use framework, we will see that to be useful it will have to have views on the kinds of ecosystems we want to restore where. It will definitely have to have a view on what we want to do with the east of the country versus the west of the country, where our objectives will be very different, and the incentives and the regulations that will fall out of that. After that, the local nature recovery with farmers working on a landscape or a catchment scale could be a very powerful way of implementing that. Does that answer your question?

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Yes. I just wondered whether you felt that they had a bit of a handicap, being called nature recovery strategies rather than land use strategies.

Henry Dimbleby: That is an interesting question. Yes, because it could be more than that. If you bundle carbon into the nature and effectively it is paying for public goods, it is a good description of what you pay for public goods but part of a land use strategy is what private goods and what food produced from that area will be, so it does not quite encapsulate exactly what you would be doing in those catchment areas. You are right—it is a good point.

Q202 **The Earl of Leicester:** My questions have been very ably asked by Lord Watts and, indeed, you, Chair. The answers have been very interesting, talking about the catchments and different counties and regional delivery of this from the land up. I want to follow on from what Baroness Young was saying about local nature recovery. In your report, you say that Defra should work with local nature recovery networks to prepare a national rural land map. That sounds very interesting. Do you have any idea of how much appetite there is within government and in Defra for doing such a thing? That is a jolly good starting point for a land framework.

Henry Dimbleby: Interestingly, I think the understanding that that needs to be done is growing. Funnily enough, Sir Patrick Vallance, the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, has been a very strong proponent inside government for our needing data maps, not just of the food system and land use but of many other things. He points to some of the work that Kofi Annan and the UN did on creating maps in Africa—very detailed maps of food scarcity and malnutrition, which not only showed the scale of the problem but enabled quite detailed local, village by village, responses, because it showed where the problems were.

There are all sorts of issues about data privacy. Minister Prentis, one of our Ministers, remarked to me the other day that she had been given the data that the state holds on her—on her farm—which she had never seen before, and it had changed the way that she thought about her farm. Any theory of systems change says that one of the most powerful things you can do is to have good, clear data so that everyone in the system gets

the best possible understanding of it. I think that is slowly moving forward.

The Earl of Leicester: Absolutely, data would influence many land users, farmers and landowners in how they manage their land. That would be very useful. Again, in your report you talk about Defra being the organisation to run a land use strategy, but today you have been including BEIS and DLUHC as well. Have I read that correctly?

Henry Dimbleby: In the strategy I said that it should be with BEIS and, I think, MHCLG—as it was in those days, before it was DLUHC—so that it should be a combined effort led by Defra. The reason I said "led by Defra but a combined effort" is that, as I referred to earlier, the amount of land proportionally that we might need to take from food production to put into housing or energy is probably quite small, although on the question of biofuels that is a significant portion of land. But yes, I said Defra with BEIS and MHCLG.

The Earl of Leicester: Returning to the previous point, I think that if you provide all this—if there is a national land map and it is provided to all the land users to enable them to better make decisions about their land—that is incredibly helpful. It was also encouraging to read in your report that it cannot come from central government—"Now that we have the data on your land, this is what you have to do"—because the individual farmer has to have bought into it and want to do what he or she is good at.

Henry Dimbleby: Absolutely. Interestingly, I was talking to the RPA people at Groundswell and they are already preparing to reverse the way they do applications for payment. Rather than putting all your data on to the system, when you put in an application they will say, "Here is what we think you have in your land" and you will be able to correct it, which is a huge step forward. If you could add to that, "By the way, here is information that we hold on your land that you might not have been able to see" and then the landowner could annotate that, you begin to create a pretty fantastic database.

Q203 **The Chair:** Does anybody have any more questions from our side? Do you have any other points for us that you think you may have missed, Henry?

Henry Dimbleby: For me, the most important thing is that we get some of the biggest brains in this country thinking about what land use strategies might look like. I mentioned that the Sustainable Food Trust had published one. I understand that the RSPB might be about to publish one. I think it will say that we need a bit more wild land. Those people here who have networks or power might be able to get groups of people from different walks of life and funding together, with academics, to create food strategies and land use strategies prior to the Government's publication. Having that discussion live and ongoing in the public sphere, rather than just waiting for what the Government do in a year's time, is

the single most important thing that this committee could do between now and then.

The Chair: That is very useful information. Thank you very much for a good hour's evidence session. It has been incredibly useful for us and it has, I would like to say, advanced our thinking enormously. Thank you very much and good luck with your ongoing battles to impose your strategy on lesser minds.

Henry Dimbleby: Thank you for inviting me.