



23/01/2026

National Trust

Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP
Chairman Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Carmichael,

Response to Evidence from Baroness Batters on National Trust's role in Landscape Recovery Schemes

I am writing in response to comments made during the recent Select Committee evidence session regarding the role of large landowners in public funding schemes, particularly the suggestion that such schemes allow landowners – such as the National Trust – to draw down significant sums of public money without appropriate benefit to tenant farmers, or without providing opportunities for tenant farmers to have a say in decision-making.

I would like to clarify how the National Trust is operating within the Landscape Recovery Schemes, which differ fundamentally from the model described.

Landscape Recovery is not a mechanism through which the National Trust receives large amounts of public funding to use alone. These are long-term, collaborative agreements in which we share risk with government and work directly with our tenants to design and deliver the required activities. Our tenants gain advantage through our ability to coordinate ambitious, landscape scale proposals across multiple holdings - proposals that are strong, deliverable, based on the mutual benefits of partnership and align fully with the public benefits sought by government.

Nor is it correct to say that tenant farmers don't have a say in the development of Landscape Recovery schemes where we are the landlord. We follow Defra's participation guidance and engage regularly with farmers via a range of forums that can include group meetings and one-to-one conversations. Each of our Round 1 Pilots has a project manager who is working closely with the farming community. There is no pressure on any of our tenant farmers to sign up to schemes if they do not want to. These projects succeed only where tenants are fully involved and where the economic benefits flow directly into their farm businesses.

Our projects are designed to ensure that:

- **They support the long-term economic viability of tenant farms.** Tenants are integral to delivery, and the actions required are structured to strengthen farm businesses.
- **Financial benefits go directly to activity delivered on the ground.** Our approach ensures that tenants are rewarded for the work they undertake, and that they – not the landowner – receive the economic benefits associated with delivery. Our interest is in ensuring the outcomes align with both government expectations and the public benefit purposes of the Trust in line with our charitable purposes and Acts of Parliament.
- **Participation enhances business resilience.** Many tenants regard Landscape Recovery as an opportunity to diversify income, build more predictable revenue streams, and reduce exposure to market volatility. At scale, these projects support the development of resilient, nature rich rural economies.
- **Support is practical, tailored, and ongoing.** We work closely with tenants to support delivery, understand implications for their enterprises, and safeguard profitability over the lifespan of each agreement.
- **They are developed as wider partnerships that enable others beyond the land we own to participate.** In coordinating large place-based partnerships to support Landscape Recovery we seem to work with other farmers in a way which seeks to support wider access, enable impact at a greater scale, and support farming businesses that want to participate who aren't National Trust tenants. To illustrate, we are already working with and supporting third partners on our projects, such as at Holnicote and the Yorkshire Dales.

In view of the longer-term commitments around Landscape Recovery we would also underline that we believe it is correct and appropriate for formal agreements with government to be held by bodies that are able to convene, coordinate and manage these complex relationships. We are not alone in taking on that role. For example, for the Upper Duddon Landscape Recovery project in Cumbria it is Leeds University that hold the agreement.

We believe it's therefore important to recognise that the National Trust, or others, that act in this convening role, take on substantial long-term obligations and liabilities on behalf of the partnership in a way which is essential to making them possible. There are aspects of the government's contracting approach that we find challenging, and which individual tenants would not be able to shoulder without our advocacy for improvements and greater certainty. Nonetheless, the structures we seek to put in place work to ensure that tenants are supported, protected, and financially rewarded for the work they undertake - far from being excluded from the benefits.

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In the Committee's deliberations, we therefore would wish to be clear that while we hugely value the work Baroness Batters has done through the farm profitability review, and that we share her desire to see tenant farmers better rewarded for what they deliver for people and nature, we do not accept the characterisation of the Trust's role in the evidence given to the Committee. The suggestion therefore that Landscape Recovery represents "large landowners pulling down huge sums of public money" and without tenant involvement does not reflect how these schemes operate, nor how the National Trust works with its farming tenants.

Finally, I would wish to underline that our involvement in Landscape Recovery is rooted in our charitable purpose and in ensuring that, where we participate, public and charitable investment works together to support both environmental outcomes and the long-term sustainability and success of the farm enterprises with which we work.

I would be very happy to expand on our approach with the Committee either through a landscape recovery visit or through taking your committee's questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harry Bowell', with a stylized, flowing script.

Harry Bowell
Director of Land & Nature

cc: Baroness Batters
Environment and Food Select Committee members

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