



**Environment, Food  
and Rural Affairs  
Committee**

Tuesday, 14 April 2026

**Minister Mary Creagh**  
**Defra**  
**(By email)**

**Subject: Evidence session on 24 March**

Dear Mary,

I would first like to place on record our thanks for your appearance before the Committee on 24 March. We appreciated the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues, particularly the publication of the Land Use Framework.

I have set out below questions we unable to ask due to time constraints, questions that arose following the session and areas where you committed to write to the Committee with further detail.

**Solar farms**

Terry Jermy asked you about the quality of ground-mounted solar being installed in England and the potential for agrivoltaic farming underneath them (Q29). You stated that this is something you would raise with other ministers. Can you please detail how the Government will ensure that future solar farm investments will allow for continued food production.

**Nature markets**

You noted the need for a legal framework to provide policy and legal certainty for nature markets (Q36). Given this, what assessment have you made of the potential merits of making Taskforce for Nature-Based Financial Disclosures (TNFD) mandatory?

You also noted the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund as a means of helping farmers engage with natural capital markets (Q36). Given this Fund was last open in 2024, could you please provide details of any plans Defra has to reopen it for applications.

**Protected areas reforms**

Josh Newbury raised the issue of complexity and overlap with the laws designating land as a National Landscape, National Park, or protected site for nature (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest) (Q38). Could you please outline Defra's view on the suitability of existing legislation in this area for achieving Government nature targets, and any plans in place for that legislation's improvement.

**Ancient woodland funding**

Josh Newbury asked about plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) funding (Q39-40), and in particular cost-benefit comparisons between PAWS and new

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woodland funding. You stated that you would investigate whether this is possible and write back to us with further details.

### **Circular economy**

We also asked about the quality of UK waste data, but time constraints prohibited a full response (Q125-127). As such, can you set out:

- a) the major gaps or weaknesses in our waste data (for instance, do recycling rates reflect how much is actually recycled?); and
- b) how the Government intends to fill in these gaps or strengthen our data sources.

You committed to talk to other ministers regarding the issue of waste fishing gear (Q140). Please can you provide an update on Defra's plans to tackle this issue.

You also highlighted that the Government is looking to develop insurance so that landowners can be financially protected against the costs of clearing up waste crime for which they are not at fault, a policy mentioned in the Government's Waste Crime Action Plan (Q161). Could you please provide Defra's assessment of the barriers to this insurance and how the Government is working with providers to find solutions.

### **Other matters**

In the context of Government plans to reduce foreign aid spending from 0.5% to 0.3% of Gross National Income by 2027, what assessment have you made of the reductions impact on Defra-funded programmes overseas, particularly those aimed at tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution?

I would be grateful for your responses to the questions outlined above by Monday 11 May.

Yours sincerely,

Yours truly,  


**Rt Hon Mr Alistair Carmichael MP**  
**Chair, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee**