

# News story: Exercise TOXIC DAGGER – the sharp end of chemical warfare

40 Commando Royal Marines and The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) have staged the UK's biggest annual exercise to prepare troops for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) operations. Exercise TOXIC DAGGER is supported by Dstl, along with Public Health England (PHE) and The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), and is the largest exercise of its kind in the country.

Specialists in CBRN from Dstl and AWE are able to create realistic exercise scenarios based on the latest threat information. Completing the training and exercising against these scenarios provides a challenging programme for the Royal Marines to demonstrate their proficiency in the methods to detect, assess and mitigate a CBRN threat. The three-week programme included Company-level attacks and scenarios concerning CBRN vignettes, concluding with a full-scale exercise involving government and industry scientists and more than 300 military personnel.

Major Rob Garside, from 40 Commando Royal Marines, said:

Working with Dstl means we have the most up-to-date information and a realistic exercise. This ensures we are well prepared for a CBRN operating environment. It is vital we can make rapid decisions and are able to protect and support specialists who come in to deal with any incident. On operations these specialists are on hand to advise and we must ensure we already have a strong understanding of their capabilities and what they require of us as a military force.

The Dstl lead for CBRN exercises said:

40 Commando would be first on the ground in the event of a CBRN incident. We ensure they're up to date on the latest threats and make the exercise truly realistic. They not only have to provide a fighting force in an unstable environment, they must also be able to assess the scene and know what they're dealing with.

That's where Dstl, PHE, AWE and the Defence CBRN Centre come in, as we provide the technical information the Marines require.

Find out more about [Dstl's CBRN work](#)

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## News story: David Davis' Foundations of the Future Economic Partnership Speech

Good morning.

It's a pleasure to be here in Vienna.

A city which, like Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam and of course London, has earned its status as one of Europe's truly global cities.

These are places which shape the nations in which they are situated.

And the ideas and values of those of us who are proud to call ourselves Europeans – as well as being Austrian, French, German, Dutch or indeed British.

I suspect that nowhere is that more true than Vienna, which has a long history as a capital of ideas.

Indeed, I suspect that when the Vienna Circle gathered in the Cafe Central in this city, they produced more challenging ideas in a day than many universities do in a decade.

Ideas that form the intellectual basis of modern politics.

These global cities bring us together.

This week alone, in London's great universities, students from across Europe will be taught the ideas of the Austrian School of Economics.

While your incredible Vienna State Opera will see a leading English soprano star in work by Handel, a Londoner born in Germany.

And just this morning tens of thousands of Austrians will go to work to earn a living from companies which are owned or headquartered in the United Kingdom.

These are the current, lived, shared experiences, and they point the way to a shared future which will continue after Brexit.

Now I know that since our Referendum much thought, throughout Europe, has gone into what Britain's relationship with the European Union really means.

Whether a close partnership is really possible with a nation that, by the decision of its people, is leaving the structures designed to produce such a relationship.

And whether Britain is going to be the same country it has been in the past.

Dependable,

Open,

Fair,

A bastion of Parliamentary democracy,

And a defender of liberty, and the rule of law.

Well, to cut to the chase – we are.

We were before we joined the European Union, we are while we are members, and we will be after we have left.

And I'm here to explain not just why we must continue to work together as the closest of partners and friends, but also how we should go about doing it.

We are currently negotiating the Implementation Period, a crucial bridge to our new partnership.

And next month we will start detailed discussions on exactly how our new relationship will look, which is why this tour of Europe is happening today.

But before we begin that process I believe there are two important principles which can help us point in the right direction.

The first is Britain's determination to lead a race to the top in global standards.

The second is the principle of fair competition, which underpins the best elements of the European economy, and which we must work hard to spread.

## **The vote to leave**

Throughout all of this, it is essential to keep in mind the reasons Britain voted to leave the European Union.

It was not, and never will be, a rejection of European ideals, our shared values and civilisation.

When we joined the European Community it was to participate in an economic organisation which has since adapted in ways that might work for many European nations, but does not work for the United Kingdom.

Our Referendum was a straightforward choice: a decision to move away from pooled sovereignty in favour of more control of our own destiny.

So when my colleagues and I take decisions around the Cabinet table about Brexit...

It's with the intention of ensuring choices about Britain's future are taken

by Britain's parliament, directly accountable to the British people.

It's not in order to undermine Europe, or to act against the interests of our nearest neighbours.

Having the European Union and its member states succeed, as our closest friends and allies, is absolutely in our national interest.

And if that doesn't seem obvious, just look at the ways we have used our sovereignty since the Referendum vote itself.

On Saturday our Prime Minister Theresa May explained the United Kingdom's steadfast commitment to European security.

At home, we're delivering an ambitious environmental plan, that aims to leave the environment in a better state than that we found it in.

We have a modern industrial strategy which makes targeted investments to address long-term needs.

And responding to the revolution in modern working practices through the Taylor Review, which aims to ensure workers get the best possible combination of protection and opportunities from the modern economy.

These are the signposts to what the United Kingdom will look like after we have left the structures of the European Union.

## **Race to the top**

Because when it comes our economic and regulatory systems, and how Britain will use our additional sovereignty, we face a new global context.

The world stands on the brink of the next phase of globalisation.

With competition from across the world and advances in new technology like autonomous vehicles, artificial intelligence and 'smart' technologies which will transform our lives once again.

And as the tectonic plates of the global economy shift ever more rapidly, we must be ready.

So it is the choice of our country and the government of which I am a part – not, as some in continental Europe seem to fear, to lead a competitive race to the bottom...

But to lead a global race to the top.

Because the future of standards and regulations – the building blocks of free trade – is increasingly global.

And the world is waking up to it.

I was struck by what Emmanuel Macron said earlier this month, and I

quote him:

If we do not define a standard for international cooperation, we will never manage to convince the middle and working classes, that globalization is good for them.

That's Mr Macron. I could not agree more.

But we have to act on that insight.

For the UK, that means building on the reputation that we already have, as new technologies evolve and develop.

Because if we want to turn inventive ideas into successful industries...

This will require effective, and supportive, regulation.

Regulation which gives confidence to firms considering investment, and to consumers considering how they might use them.

Take the automotive industry – where the game-changing development of driverless cars, properly managed, will make travel faster, cheaper, more reliable and safer.

This is a brand new technology which requires a brand new legal framework: covering insurance, testing regulations, data, privacy, ownership and liability.

While the UK has some of the most creative and exciting facilities and opportunities for automotive investment in the world.

Sustainable growth has to be supported by regulatory environments which deliver for consumers, passengers and wider society – without creating a crushing administrative burden for business.

So we are striving to set the global agenda for effective regulatory frameworks that keep consumers and passengers safe.

Which is why we are developing a long-term regulatory framework for self-driving vehicles, while updating our Code of Practice for testing them.

And we are also introducing new legislation, so that the use of self-driving vehicles can be covered by compulsory insurance.

The same is true for drones.

I soon expect to receive my deliveries from Amazon by drone.

In fact – at this moment, weather permitting, at my home in Yorkshire – a robot lawnmower, designed in Sweden and built in the North East of England, will be mowing the grass.

But if we are to realise the full potential of new aerial drone technology,

we must also maintain our world-class aviation safety record – and address security and privacy concerns.

To that end, the Government has set out fresh measures and new legislation, that will build the regulatory framework to ensure that drones are used safely.

Making us one of the first countries in the world to bring forward specific laws in this area.

Because by leading from the front and setting standards, you can drive innovation and enable new technology to thrive.

And by making it global, as President Macron proposes, we can give confidence to consumers without handicapping industry.

## **International cooperation**

This race to the top is essential to tackle our shared challenges.

Work to combat climate change, for example, has to be done at an international level.

Air pollution, rising sea levels greenhouse gases do not respect national or even continental boundaries.

So international collaboration, such as the Paris Climate Agreement, is vital if we are going to protect our environment for future generations.

And in consumer standards, we will play a full role in the push for global standards in car safety, supporting the work of the United Nations.

So we will build on the leading reputation we have, and take other countries with us, as new challenges emerge.

And yes – that will mean continuing to work with other European countries to drive new standards.

This is an area where we should be respectful partners, not suspicious competitors.

## **High standards**

The United Kingdom is incredibly well placed to make this work.

We have an unrivalled track record in promoting high standards, both at home and abroad.

Standards for products and services that originated from our own national bodies are adopted the world over, in a wide range of sectors.

Eight out of ten of the most used and implemented standards worldwide, ranging from product quality to environmental management, originated in the

UK.

The international standard for making large-scale events more sustainable – developed for the 2012 London Olympics – is now being put to good use at the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.

While we have been a member of the European Union, the UK has been instrumental in the design of its rules.

Why? Because we are a leading proponent of the rules based international system.

Be that in security, in defence or trade.

From Linz to London, from Salzburg to Stirling – we have helped lead the way in protecting employees from exploitative working practices.

Protecting shoppers from shoddy goods.

Ensuring patients are safe and have access to the best public health protection.

And holding businesses to high standards.

While in the European Union, the United Kingdom led the charge for business practices and more accountability to the benefit of all involved.

Just look at our record:

- On safety at work, our industrial workers are the safest in Europe. The fatality incidence rate, as it is delicately known, is the lowest in Europe, thanks, not to European legislation, but to British laws initially passed in the early and mid-70s
- Britain was one of the first Member States to introduce the right to flexible working hours for parents and carers in 2003
- In financial services we go well beyond the minimum European standards by ring-fencing retail banking from more risky investment activity, and we've taken the lead in pushing for higher capital ratio requirements
- We've spearheaded a change in culture in the banking and insurance industries, with new regimes to address mismanagement. There's nothing in European legislation which goes as far
- We have led the way in implementing measures to reduce multinational tax avoidance, and are one of only three European Union countries to operate a tax disclosure regime

- We pushed for – and have always defended – a rigorous state aid system with robust enforcement mechanisms within the European Union
- The United Kingdom was the first country in the world to set legally binding targets to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. That saw us reduce our emissions by 40% since 1990 – faster than any oG7 country or European country
- And after Brexit, plans are in the pipeline for a new, independent body that would continue to uphold environmental standards

We will continue our track record of meeting high standards, after we leave the European Union.

## **Our commitment**

Now, I know that for one reason or another there are some people who have sought to question that these are really our intentions.

They fear that Brexit could lead to an Anglo-Saxon race to the bottom.

With Britain plunged into a Mad Max style world borrowed from dystopian fiction.

These fears about a race to the bottom are based on nothing, not our history, not our intentions, nor our national interest.

Frankly, the competitive challenge we in the UK and the European Union will face from the rest of the world – where 90 percent of growth in markets will come from – will not be met by a reduction in standards.

We will never be cheaper than China, or have more resources than Brazil.

This challenge can only be met by an increase in quality, an increase in service levels, an increase in intellectual content.

So while I profoundly disagree with those who spread these fears – it does remind us all that we should provide reassurance.

And that's why it's a message delivered by every member of Britain's government as we meet our European counterparts.

Whether it's Theresa May's commitment to maintaining and enhancing workers rights.

The Chancellor's powerful advocacy for the stability of the European banking system.

Michael Gove's crusading zeal to improve animal welfare and environmental outcomes.



Or my friend the Foreign Secretary, who explained in an important speech last week how ending membership of the European Union institutions would not stop our shared European culture, values, civilisation.

## **Ongoing trade with the EU**

This race to the top has a clear read across to our exit negotiations.

The future trade talks will be a negotiation like no other.

We start from a position of total alignment, with unprecedented experience in working with one another's regulators and institutions.

The agreement we strike will not be about how to build convergence, but what we do when one of us chooses to make changes to our rules.

Neither side should put up unnecessary barriers during this process.

Take a car produced here in Austria to be exported to the United Kingdom.

Currently, that vehicle only has to undergo one series of approvals, in one country, to show that it meets the required regulatory standards.

And those approvals are accepted across the European Union.

That's exactly the sort of arrangement we want to see maintained even after we leave the European Union.

And while we will be seeking a bespoke agreement, reflecting our shared history and existing trade, there are already precedents outside the EU that we can look to.

The European Union itself has a number of mutual recognition agreements with a variety of countries from Switzerland to Canada to South Korea.

These cover a huge array of products – toys, automotives, electronics, medical devices – and many many more.

A crucial part of any such agreement is the ability for both sides to trust each other's regulations and the institutions that enforce them. With a robust and independent arbitration mechanism.

Such mutual recognition will naturally require close, even-handed cooperation between these authorities and a common set of principles to guide them.

And the certainty that Britain's plan – its blueprint for life outside of the European Union – is a race to the top in global standards.

And not a regression from the high standards we have now

It will provide the basis of trust that means that Britain's regulators and institutions can continue to be recognised.

This will be a crucial part of ensuring our future economic partnership is an

open one, and that trade remains as frictionless as possible – something particularly important in the context of Ireland.

I am certain that is in the interests of both sides.

And because of that, I am certain that we can get this right.

## **Fair competition**

But of course, it will not be easy.

We are seeking a new framework that allows for a close economic partnership – that recognises the fact that we are leaving the EU.

That recognises our trusted, historic relationship, upon which many of our companies depend.

And the principle of fairness, and fair competition, which is essential to any trade agreement between any two states, will be particularly important here.

Turning this into a functioning economic partnership will be a mutual endeavour – as will the design of mechanisms to ensure both sides respect open trade and fair competition.

But I have three principles in mind which will help illustrate what we mean by fairness.

First, fair competition means that it cannot be right that a company situated in the European Union would be able to be heavily subsidised by the state but still have unfettered access to the United Kingdom market. And vice versa.

The UK has long been a vocal proponent of restricting unfair subsidies to ensure competitive markets.

It is good for taxpayers.

It is good for consumers.

And it ensures an efficient allocation of resources.

These principle are true across the globe, and will continue to be true in the United Kingdom-European Union relationship.

Second, fairness means protecting consumers against anti-competitive behaviour.

The United Kingdom will continue to be a leading advocate of open investment flows after we leave the European Union.

But it cannot mean that an European Union company could merge with a United Kingdom company and significantly reduce consumer choice.

In our interconnected, globalised world, where goods, services and investment

flow across borders...

There will still be a mutual benefit to the UK and European Union cooperating to protect our consumers, our taxpayers and our businesses by promoting fair competition.

So we will look to develop ways to deliver our shared goal: ensuring fair competition across the United Kingdom and the countries of Europe.

Because it's in all our interests to make sure that people are properly protected, and have a right to recourse when things go wrong.

And third, fairness means operating with a degree of mutual respect.

Respect in our desire to reach a deal that recognises the distinct legal order of each side.

And in our determination to carry out the sovereign decision of the British people.

If we follow these three critical principles, we will reach an ambitious future partnership that ensures trade remains as open and frictionless as possible.

## **Conclusion**

Brexit will inevitably mean a change in the way British, Austrian and other European Union companies do business.

It has to, if we are to make good on the referendum result, and carve a path for Britain to strike its own trade deals, have its own immigration policy, and make our courts sovereign once more.

My message to you, in this room, is that these goals will not change the kind of country Britain is.

A dynamic and open country.

That supports businesses like yours to grow, to invest, and to innovate in a competitive, open and fair market.

One leading a race to the top in global standards.

Projecting the values of fair competition.

And respecting the democratic decisions of people across Europe .

In a way that benefits the whole of Europe and all its citizens.

Thank you very much.

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# Government response: Voice for Justice UK's campaign about gender reassignment

The Department of Health and Social Care notes the [petition's call for the banning of medical intervention to change gender](#), whether surgical or by the administration of sex-changing hormones, for people below the age of 18.

With regard to young people's consent to these procedures and treatment, the department's position is that patients have a fundamental legal and ethical right to determine what happens to their own bodies. Valid consent to treatment is therefore central to all forms of healthcare, from providing personal care to undertaking major surgery.

If children have the capacity to give consent for themselves, then consent should be sought direct from them. Once young people reach the age of 16, they are presumed in law to be competent to give consent for themselves for their own surgical, medical or dental treatment, and any associated procedures, such as investigations, anaesthesia or nursing care.

Those under 16 are not automatically presumed to be legally competent to make decisions about their healthcare. However, the courts have stated that a person under 16 will be competent to give valid consent to a particular intervention if they have "sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable him or her to understand fully what is proposed".

If a child is not competent to give consent for themselves, consent should be sought from a person with parental responsibility. This will often, but not always, be the child's parent. Legally, consent is only needed from one person with parental responsibility.

As is the case where patients are giving consent for themselves, those giving consent on behalf of child patients must have the capacity to consent to the intervention in question, be acting voluntarily and be appropriately informed. The power to consent must be exercised according to the welfare principle, namely, that the child's welfare or best interests must be paramount. Even where a child lacks capacity to consent on their own behalf, it is good practice to involve the child as much as possible in the decision-making process.

Where necessary, the courts can overrule a refusal by a person with parental responsibility. It is recommended that certain important decisions, such as sterilisation for contraceptive purposes, should be referred to the courts for guidance, even if those with parental responsibility consent to the operation going ahead.

The NHS has strict guidelines regarding the prescription of puberty-blocking and cross-sex hormones for young people. These drugs may only be prescribed with the agreement of a specialist multidisciplinary team and after a careful assessment of the individual, and generally once the patient is around 15 years old for hormone blockers and 16 years old for cross-sex hormones.

For further information on transgender matters, please see the [NHS Choices website](#).

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## [News story: Apply to the Attorney General's London A and B panel of junior counsel](#)

### **London A and B Panels**

Membership of the London panels is open to both barristers and solicitors with the appropriate qualifications.

Members of the A panel deal with the most complex government cases in all kinds of courts and tribunals including the Supreme Court. They will often appear against QC's. Those previously appointed to the A panel have generally had in excess of 10 years advocacy experience in actual practice (from end of second 6 months' pupillage for barristers or date of commencement of advocacy for solicitors).

Members of the B panel deal with substantial cases but in general not as complex as those handled by the A panel. They will generally be instructed where knowledge and experience of a particular field is required. Those previously appointed to the B panel have generally had between 5 and 10 years advocacy experience in actual practice (from end of second 6 months' pupillage for barristers or date of commencement of advocacy for solicitors).

There are vacancies on the Panels in all areas of public and private law.

### **Application**

To obtain details about the eligibility requirements and the application process, we recommend reading our [London Panels information sheet](#) (MS Word Document, 110KB) .

Before making an application, please email [PanelCounsel@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:PanelCounsel@governmentlegal.gov.uk) to register your interest in applying. Please note that registering an interest does not commit you to making an application if you later decide not to do so.

Once you have registered, you will be provided with a link to access our online portal and obtain an application pack.

Completed applications must be submitted by midday on Friday 6 April 2018.

## **Further information and mentoring**

If you have any queries, please contact the Government Legal Department Panel Counsel Secretariat via email [panelcounsel@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:panelcounsel@governmentlegal.gov.uk) or on 020 7210 1506.

We encourage applications from as wide a range as possible of those eligible to apply. We will therefore put advocates who want to discuss the application process for the London A or B Panel in touch with an established panel member as a mentor. The mentor will discuss the application process, the eligibility criteria and the presentation of relevant information on the application form either by telephone or in a meeting.

If you are considering applying and want a mentor please contact the Panel Counsel Secretariat via email: [panelcounsel@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:panelcounsel@governmentlegal.gov.uk) before Friday 28 February 2018.

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## **Speech: A Brighter Future for Farming**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you for that very kind introduction.

It's a great pleasure to be here at this – my first – NFU conference.

But also a sadness that it will be your last as President, Meurig.

You have been an outstanding leader of this organisation, a powerful voice for farmers and a highly effective advocate for agriculture influencing every level of Government.

I have – hugely – valued your candour and wisdom and will miss our regular meetings.

Everyone in this room should know, and I am sure does, how determinedly you have stood up for their interests in all our conversations and you deserve their gratitude for your exemplary leadership.

You leave very big boots to fill.

But it is the NFU's strength – and this country's good fortune – that you have a talented field stepping up to take on new leadership roles in the

union and I wish them all every success.

## **Food at the heart of life**

One issue you have continually impressed on me, and one principle I wholeheartedly agree with, is that the heart of farming is food production.

I admire farmers as stewards of the countryside – as you put it to me, Meurig, – the very first friends of the earth.

I appreciate everything farmers do to keep our soils rich, our rivers clean, to provide habitats for wildlife and to help in the fight against climate change and broader environmental degradation. And I want to see farmers better rewarded for these vital public services.

But farmers would not be in a position to provide these public goods, indeed we would not have the countryside we all cherish, without successful, productive, profitable farm businesses.

More than that, without successful farm businesses and high quality food production we will not be able in the future to maintain the balance and health of our whole society and economy. Rural communities depend on profitable agricultural businesses to thrive. The landscapes which draw tourists, from the Lake District to Dartmoor, the Northumberland coast to Pembrokeshire, depend on farmers for their maintenance and upkeep. The hotels, bed and breakfasts, restaurants and pubs which do so much to enhance the attractiveness of these areas for all visitors depend, crucially, on high quality local produce and a healthy local food economy to be at their best.

If we get policy right for those who produce our food we can ensure sustainable and balanced growth across the United Kingdom, we can ensure the investment is there in the future to make not just the countryside but the country as a whole flourish, we can enhance our environment, provide rewarding employment for future generations, improve the physical health and well-being of the population and shape a better world for our children and grandchildren.

## **Food, at last, at the heart of government thinking**

That is why I have been determined to ensure that the voice, influences and concerns of those who produce our food has been amplified as much as possible, and put at the heart of Government thinking in every policy area.

I fear that, in the past, the concerns of farmers and food producers were given insufficient weight in the design and implementation of UK Government policy.

DEFRA, and its predecessor department MAFF, were kept unjustifiably low in the Whitehall pecking order.

That was a mistake. But it could be, and was, defended by some on the basis that the major policy decisions governing farming and food production were

taken not at a domestic level but at European levels through the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. Since UK ministers and civil servants had little room to shape, let alone, reform the CAP's operation there was, it was argued, little justification for expending energy thinking hard about food policy.

This failure was all the more lamentable because, as everyone here knows, the food and drink industry is Britain's biggest manufacturing sector. It's also Britain's fastest-growing, with our export growth over the last few months having been driven by massive increases in food and drink sales.

That growth has been enabled by Britain's decision to leave the European Union and the new opportunities it has given our exporters. And leaving the EU also, of course, requires us to develop new policies on food and farming. For the first time in almost half a century, we are free to design policies from first principles that put British farmers, and consumers, first.

The brilliant team of civil servants in Defra have been rising to that challenge and also ensuring that the rest of Government does as well.

So we can now have, for the very first time in Government, a strategy that is designed to integrate the concerns of all those involved in food and drink production – from farm to fork – to develop the right policies for the future. That strategy is at the heart of the broader [Industrial Strategy](#) which you will hear more about from my friend and colleague Greg Clark, the Business Secretary, tomorrow. Indeed strengthening the food and drink sector is integral to the broader economic policy direction the Prime Minister has outlined for the whole Government. Which is why the Department for International Trade is making action to improve food and drink exports a central ambition in its plans for this year.

Working with the Business Department we have also established a [Food and Drink Sector Council](#) with representatives from primary producers, processors and distributors, the hospitality sector and retail, to identify where more needs to be done. Current and past NFU Presidents are among the representatives on the council and working groups, who will look at how to further improve productivity, enhance training, support innovation and open new export markets.

This work will be the precursor to a new Food and Drink Sector Deal to build on existing successes and prepare the sector better for the future.

Fresh thinking about food has also meant that we have been working with the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education on policies to improve nutrition, health and well-being, with Defra as the driving force for improvement.

And we have also been working across Government to improve procurement. As we leave the EU, we will have the chance to review how we use the immense buying power of the public sector to, at last, properly support British food producers. Changing how Government procures food can help drive the change we all want to see – we can use public money to reward those farmers and food producers who grow healthy food in a sustainable fashion, we can invest in



local food economies and we can support higher environmental standards overall.

The voices of farmers and food producers, their hopes and concerns, expectations and ambitions, and indeed obligations and duties, are now more central to Government thinking than at any time for fifty years. It is crucial that we, together, make the most of this historic opportunity as we leave the EU, this unfrozen moment, to shape policy decisively in the interest of future generations.

## **The future of food and farming**

What should our, shared, aim be? What do we, ideally, want the future to look like?

Well my own view is that we want to uphold the trinity of values identified by E.F. Schumacher – health, beauty and permanence.

We want a healthy and beautiful countryside, producing food that makes us healthier as individuals, in a society which has a healthier attitude towards the natural world, an attitude that values permanence, where we wish to preserve and enhance natural capital and where we value the traditions and virtues of rural life.

But, as I explained in my speech to the Oxford Farming Conference earlier this year, the pursuit of these values takes place against a background of accelerating demographic, scientific, political and economic change.

Change is inevitable, whether in or out of the EU. Population growth, technological innovation, environmental pressures and evolving social attitudes require us all to adapt.

So we need policies which can help farmers and food producers develop resilience in the face of change, adapt to new opportunities and meet the expectations of future generations, while all the time promoting health, celebrating beauty and valuing permanence.

And I believe that outside the EU there are exciting opportunities for us to shape the future in a way which reflects our priorities. We can design the policies best fitted for our food producers and consumers. And best equipped to ensure our food economy remains sustainable in the long term.

Because the Common Agricultural Policy has not worked either for our food economy or for the natural environment. That is why we have outlined a new direction of travel in our 25 Year Environment Plan and will be publishing a Consultation Paper on the future of agricultural policy in England very shortly.

And, I hope we can see similar ambition in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Outside the EU the devolved administrations will have more powers than ever to shape agricultural policies that suit their jurisdictions and to devise methods of support that suit the farmers and consumers in their nations.

Of course, we are all working together to ensure there will be UK-wide frameworks on areas of common concern like animal and plant health and no decisions are taken that harm our own internal UK market. And of course we want to develop world-leading animal welfare and environmental standards

And leaving the EU also means – critically – reforming the current system of subsidy for farming and food production. As we all know it doesn't work for producers or consumers anywhere in the UK. Nor indeed does it deliver sustainability for the long term.

Paying people simply according to the size of their landholding drives up the cost of land, which ties up capital unproductively and acts as a barrier to entry to new talent, impeding innovation and holding back productivity growth.

The rules associated with current subsidy payments are unwieldy and, very often, counter-productive. They require farmers to spend long days ensuring conformity with bureaucratic processes which secure scarcely any environmental benefits and which, in turn, require a vast and inflexible bureaucracy to police.

As does the current farming inspection regime, which, despite several recent attempts at simplification, remains as unwieldy as ever. Every year, farmers are confronted by a barrage of inspections from different agencies, often duplicating costs in both time and money.

I am delighted to announce that Dame Glenys Stacey will be conducting a thorough and comprehensive review of this regime, seeing how these inspections can be removed, reduced or improved to reduce the burden on farmers, while maintaining and enhancing our animal and plant health standards.

This review is not only long-required but also very timely as we design future farming policy and maximise the opportunities of leaving the EU. It will provide answers to some key general questions to guide our future approach, subject to the outcome of our negotiations with the EU.

Dame Glenys has over twenty years' experience in driving reform within public sector organisations and will, I have no doubt, bring unequalled energy and skill to the task. She was also, formerly, Chief Executive of Animal Health, the precursor to APHA.

Our consultation paper will outline how we plan to change things more broadly.

The paper will outline a clear direction of travel on how we can better deliver support.

But it is a consultation not a conclusion.

Future support schemes can only – will only – work if they reflect the reality of life for farmers and food producers. So what we will outline is a model for discussion and refinement not an inflexible new order. We will need

time, and critically, your input to get any new system of support right.

## **A transition period to get reform right**

And that is why I have said that there will be a transition period for farming to ensure we get the right new system in place. A period long enough to ensure we can all adjust to make the most of future opportunities.

One – critical – aspect of any transition is access to labour.

As we prepare to leave the EU, and free movement ends, we need to take special account of the needs of agriculture.

Farming currently depends on access to labour from abroad – both seasonal and more permanent.

And it's often very highly-skilled labour. Whether its stockmen and dairy workers or the official vets in our abattoirs, 90% of whom are from EU27 nations, agriculture needs access to foreign workers.

It's already the case that the supply of labour from EU27 countries is diminishing as their economies recover and grow. So, in the future, we will need to look further afield. And think more creatively.

We understand, however, that you need to see action quickly. Not least to deal with imminent pressures. The NFU has put forward strong and compelling arguments for a Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme and I fully acknowledge your concerns.

In addition, the Government's Migration Advisory Committee are reviewing the shape of immigration policy after we're free of EU constraints. I've explained to them that we will need continued access to skilled labour if we're to keep our farming sector productive and profitable.

In the medium to long term we need, of course, to move away from a relatively labour intensive model of agriculture to a more capital intensive approach. But we can only do that if farming stays profitable. And we can only stay profitable with access to the right labour.

And as well as clarity on access to labour, you deserve clarity on future funding.

At the last election we were the only party to pledge that funding for farming would be protected – in cash terms – for the whole of the Parliament – until 2022.

We will, of course, be leaving the EU formally in March 2019 but the Government hopes we will secure an agreement from the EU to an implementation period to prepare fully for all the opportunities of the future.

In farming we have already said that we will pay the 2019 BPS scheme on the same basis as we do now. We then anticipate keeping BPS payments during a transition period in England, which should last a number of years beyond the

implementation period.

But while we want to provide those guarantees to enable all farmers to prepare for change, we plan to alter some aspects of payment in significant ways as soon as we can after leaving the EU.

At the [Oxford Farming Conference](#) I explained that during the transition we propose to reduce BPS payments and redistribute that money to provide different forms of support. There are a number of ways we can reduce the payments and I am open to views as to the best method.

Which brings me to what the new system of support will be based on.

## **What, and who, we should support**

We propose to progressively, transfer money away from BPS payments towards the payment of public money for the provision of public goods.

We will guarantee all existing agri-environment agreements entered into before we leave the EU but, critically, we will also invite farmers, land owners and land managers to help us pilot new ways of investing in environmental enhancement and other public goods.

We will outline in the consultation paper what we think could be covered by the definition of public goods and how payments could be made. But, again, the consultation paper is a contribution to the conversation not the final word. We will listen to farmers, and others, to ensure our policy proposals can effectively deliver the outcomes the public want to see.

I believe the most important public good we should pay for is environmental protection and enhancement. The work farmers do to ensure our soils can sustain growth in the future, woods are planted to prevent flooding and provide a carbon sink and hedgerows and other habitats provide a home for wildlife should be properly paid for.

We already estimate that soil degradation costs the economy of England and Wales a huge £1.2 billion every year. Soil is a building block of life, alongside water and air and we need to invest in its health.

We all have a moral obligation to hand over our environment to the next generation in a better state than we found it. And no-one appreciates that better than farmers. But if we are to ensure that our environment is enhanced we must invest in it, and it is those who are most intimately involved in caring for our countryside, our farmers, who should be supported most energetically in achieving that ambition.

I believe there are other public goods we should also use public money to secure.

I believe we should invest in research and development to improve productivity and bring further environmental benefits.

Some of the developments which improve both profitability and the quality of

produce spring from farmers themselves developing new and more sophisticated approaches towards natural food production. Changing cultivation methods which require fewer expensive inputs and yield healthier food deserve to be championed and shared. Across the world farmers are learning from their experience with natural systems and making changes to their animal husbandry techniques or cropping patterns with transformational results.

And we also need to invest in the potential of new technology. For example, I know the NFU have campaigned hard for a multi-species Livestock Information Programme. Whilst I cannot make a firm announcement yet you've made a compelling case and I hope to say more very soon.

Whether its automation and machine learning, data science or gene-editing, improved tracking and traceability of livestock or new plant bio-security measures, there are specific innovations which will increase productivity across farming, bring food costs down for all, help us improve human and animal health and ensure we better protect the environment. These can only be fully realised if we invest in a way which individual farmers and land owners are simply not equipped to on their own.

Without public investment to support scientific breakthroughs and help disseminate them across agriculture we won't secure the improvements we all want to see.

Making sure these breakthroughs bring the greatest benefits to the greatest number depends on even greater collaboration and co-operation between farm businesses and we will incentivise greater collaboration – not least to ensure we can guarantee environmental improvements at a landscape scale and help smaller mixed and livestock farmers cope with market volatility.

Public access to the countryside is another public good we value. Not that we should encourage everyone to ride or walk roughshod through working areas, but the more connected we all are to the countryside, the more we know and appreciate what's involved in farming and food production, the more understanding there will be of the need to value and support what farmers do. That's why initiatives like [Open Farm Sunday](#), supported by the NFU, and the work of organisations like [LEAF](#) is so important and needs to be supported.

As does the work of organisations like the Prince's Countryside Fund which support smaller farms, especially those in more challenging areas. I firmly believe that supporting those farmers who help keep rural life, and economies, healthy is a public good.

I am acutely conscious that the changes which are coming to farming leave some sectors more worried than others. And I am particularly aware that many smaller farmers, such as dairy farmers in areas like Devon or upland sheep farmers in Cumbria and Northumberland, fear that the future is particularly challenging for them. Margins are tight. Milk and lamb prices are far from generous. The risks to profitability of Bovine TB or other forces beyond the farmers' control add to stress. And the prospect of public support diminishing or disappearing makes many wonder how they can go on. I believe we have to ensure future methods of agricultural support recognise how

critical it is to value the culture in agriculture – Devon and Somerset would not be as they are – with the countryside as beautiful as it is and communities as resilient as they are – without dairy farmers. Cumbria and Northumberland, Yorkshire's Dales and Pennine Lancashire would not be as they are – both as breathtakingly beautiful and as resilient – without upland farmers.

And yes, I am romantic about it. You cannot read James Rebanks' A Shepherd's Life, with its descriptions of life sheep farming in the Lake District, without realising how precious and valuable a link with all our pasts the continuation of farming in communities such as James' provides. Men and women are hefted in those hills just as much as the sheep they care for. And preserving profitable farm businesses in those communities is just as much a public good as investment in anything I know.

I also believe investing in higher animal welfare standards and investing in improved training and education for those in agriculture and food production are clear public goods. We have a high baseline for animal health standards, which we will continue to enforce. However, we could also support industry-led initiatives to improve these standards, especially in cases where animal welfare remains at the legislative minimum. This may include pilot schemes that offer payments to farmers delivering higher welfare outcomes, or payments to farmers running trial approaches and technologies to improve animal welfare that are not yet an industry standard.

Of course there are other public goods we can identify and debate how to support. But, as I have said before, while the list may be extensive public money is not inexhaustible so we must argue for this investment not just with passion but precision.

## **Only connect**

Which brings me to investment in a public good which I know is of critical interest and vital benefit to everyone engaged in farming, but also to many others across the country.

I'm talking about broadband.

And, while on the subject, 4G mobile coverage.

Connectivity overall.

It's ridiculous that you can get better mobile phone coverage in Kenya than in parts of Kent. Unjustifiable that in the country that first guaranteed universal mail provision, invented the telephone and television and pioneered the World Wide Web that broadband provision is so patchy and poor in so many areas.

Farming cannot become as productive as it should be, rural economies cannot grow as they should, new housing cannot be provided in rural areas as so many hope to see and we cannot have an economy that works for everyone unless everyone has access to decent broadband.

Daily life, especially active economic life, is becoming increasingly difficult for those without access to fast, reliable and affordable broadband. It is the necessary infrastructure of all our lives in these times, as essential as mains electricity or potable water.

And yet rural communities in Britain are denied good access to this contemporary utility today just as the farmers of the Hill Country in Texas were denied electricity in Congressman Lyndon Johnson's day – until the New Deal transferred power to the people.

If we could provide a universal service obligation for mail in the past – so that everyone in the country knew their post would be collected and delivered on the same basis as every other citizen – if we can provide a universal guarantee now that every citizen will be given the same access to the healthcare they need when they need it, then why should we persist in discriminating over access to the essential service that is decent broadband?

We have already raised the availability of super-fast broadband from 65% of premises in 2010 to 95% by the end of 2017, which is a serious achievement. We have committed to making high speed broadband available to all by 2020 and mobile coverage to 95% of the UK by 2022. And as you will have seen, this weekend we announced a new initiative to use church spires to boost broadband and mobile connectivity in rural areas. This kind of creative thinking shows how our nation's beautiful heritage can work hand in hand with twenty-first century innovation. But we need to go still further.

Some say that if individuals choose to live in rural areas, where broadband provision and mobile phone coverage may cost more, that choice should not be "subsidised" by others in urban areas. But where do the urban dwellers get their food from, who keeps the countryside beautiful for them, who protects the landscape, keeps our nation's green lungs breathing, maintains the health, beauty and balance of nature for future generations? The people in rural areas who are deprived an important service so many take for granted.

We're planning to spend north of £60 billion on HS2, 30 times as much as it would cost to provide universal superfast broadband.

Surely investment in broadband is a vital, urgent part of improving our critical national infrastructure?

Inside the EU, rules on state aid have prevented us from investing in broadband in a way that is best for the UK.

Outside the EU, just one fifth of our annual net contribution would transform our national infrastructure.

The Prime Minister has made clear that the days of the UK making vast annual contributions to the EU are over. And when we leave the EU we can put that money towards domestic priorities, like making our digital infrastructure work by improving rural broadband and connectivity. I will be working closely with my fantastic colleague, Matt Hancock, the new DCMS Secretary of State and I know he shares my passion for sorting this out.

Universal broadband and 4G coverage for all – which could be paid for by the money we no longer have to give to the EU – that is what we mean by taking back control.

And that's not the limit of my ambition for rural Britain and our farming sector.

I've argued before that we should not seek to compete on the basis of a race to the bottom but by occupying the high ground of strong environmental, welfare and quality standards.

We produce the world's best food – our beef and lamb, cheese and milk, cod and salmon, soft fruit and salad vegetables – are recognised globally as the gold standard in fresh produce. One of the reasons why exports are growing so fast.

And that's precisely why we will not lower environmental or animal welfare standards as part of any new trade deals. We should no more lower our standards than the best brands in any market would lower theirs. Indeed we should aim higher.

The trend of our times, and it will only accelerate, is to invest in food that is healthier both for ourselves and the planet.

Rather than feeding ourselves the chemically-adulterated, over-sugared, trans-fat rich processed foods that contribute to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and massive additional pressure on the NHS, there is, rightly, a growing demand that we help more and more people adopt a healthier diet.

Adopting a healthier diet means eating more sustainably produced and carefully cultivated, British produce. More fresh British fruit and veg, fresh British milk and farmhouse cheese, grass-fed beef and lamb, sustainably caught fish and shellfish, British peas and beans, Kentish cobnuts, pulses and seeds.

The more we can support local food economies where farmers and growers provide fresh produce to local retailers, the more we can ensure supermarkets and others pay fair prices for fresh British produce, the more children in school learn to buy wisely, cook properly and eat healthily and the more public procurement values fresh, healthy, British food, the better for all our health.

That is why I believe the money we spend, as a country, supporting healthy food production is an investment not an expenditure, a way of reducing significant future costs not an enduring burden on the exchequer. Wholesome food production is an invaluable investment in the health of our nation, from which we all reap the benefits.

## **A brighter future**

As I hope you can tell I believe farming has a bright future, and I want to ensure it does.



I want to ensure you have a stronger voice in Government decision-making and the new resources Defra enjoys as well as the new structures we sit at the heart of should deliver that stronger voice.

I want to ensure you have access to as much clarity as possible over future labour, and funding, arrangements as we leave the EU. And I believe we can develop both a labour market policy and a system of funding support that is fairer to all and which enhances productivity.

I want future funding to be allocated in a way which commands enduring public support, clearly delivers important public goods, delivers productivity and innovation breakthroughs that individual farmers could not secure on their own, supports greater collaboration, gives farmers greater bargaining power, delivers environmental benefits at landscape scale, makes soils healthier and rivers cleaner, encourages the development of new habitats for wildlife and incentivises healthy food production.

I want to see public investment at last treat rural areas fairly – not least by making the universal service obligation on broadband truly universal – so ensuring farming can be more productive than ever

I want to harness the increasing interest in the health of our citizens and our planet to ensure we recognise the importance of supporting those who grow and rear the fresh, local produce which is best for us as individuals and for the environment

Driving reform in all these areas will ensure British farmers are better supported to do what they do better than any farmers in the world – produce the best quality food in the world to the highest standards – and it is time we started celebrating that.