

Brexit at the Environment Department.

The good news at the Environment Department is they did grasp the big opportunity that leaving the EU offers when it comes to ending our involvement with the Common Agricultural policy. Over the years it inflicted considerable damage on the UK. It left us short of milk quotas, shrinking our dairy industry and forcing us to import more milk based products. It prolonged the hit from BSE on our beef cattle. It paid grants to get UK farmers to rip out orchards so we imported more continental fruit. It paid large grants to successful large scale arable farmers that we did not need to pay. The UK lost considerable market share in temperate foods. The Dutch took over our flower market and came to dominate salads, the Spanish the vegetables market, the Danes the pig meat market. Most of the CAP is being swept aside.

The not so good news is the delay in putting in a replacement, and the absence of strong policies to promote more UK food production. For a department which wants to be green there is a surprising lack of interest in cutting the food miles. There are no dedicated schemes to give grants to farmers to create the orchards we have lost or to put in competitive capacity to the Dutch green houses for market gardening. There are expensive schemes to take land out of agricultural use altogether to make us more import dependent for food.

The Department is promoting more tree planting., which is fine. It needs to encourage more sustainable forestry, as what we need to do is grow more of our own roof trusses and floors, more of our own biomass for power stations and wood for furniture production.

The Department is doing little to recreate a healthy and sustainable fishery run by UK based fishing vessels and crews.