

Farming and the environment

I am all in favour of defending our landscapes, keeping our water and air clean and being kind to animals. Conservatives believe in conserving what is best in the natural world and working with the grain of Human nature and the environment.

I am in favour of reducing the pressures of development on our green fields and woods by having a more sustainable level of migration than we were allowed by the EU free movement rules. People who do come to live here should be welcomed and have access to decent housing and services. There are limits to how much extra can be supplied.

There are some who wish to re wild large areas. I do not think we have the same obligation to wolves or wild boar or wild cats as yet unborn as we do to allow space and food for all the birds and animals who currently share our land. When we seek places for wild flowers and shrubs we should balance that with the need to grow more of our own food. A field of corn or a pasture of sheep can look beautiful and is as much a part of the natural world as some newly created wild space.

We need to avoid policies which destroy livelihoods and land important to people's lives. The drowning of the Somerset levels was destroying homes and farmland in some strange experiment. The same was not tried in the Fens where they still dredged the ditches and manned the pumps to preserve England's most productive growing land. Why was the Somerset levels selected for different treatment? We also need to defend land subject to attack from the sea where it has been settled and matters to people's lives and livelihoods. In selective places we should consider as the Dutch do reclaiming land we could use for farms or dwellings.

I will continue to press DEFRA for their policies to promote food production. They seem keener on wilding when we need a proper balance.