

Our Uplands

Creating a Brighter Future

AGRICULTURE BILL BRIEFING

The Agriculture Bill receives its Second Reading in the House of Commons on 10th October 2018. As we leave the EU this Bill represents the only opportunity to legislate to create a vibrant future for our countryside.

The Uplands Alliance supports the ambitions of the government to use public money to deliver public benefits but is concerned that the Bill, as drafted, together with the accompanying policy statements are not sufficient to secure our natural and cultural heritage. These benefits and the rural communities and farming systems which are central to providing these benefits are at risk.

Our Particular Concerns are:

- There is no assurance on funding post 2022. England's Uplands currently receive ~£230 million each year. As a minimum this total needs to be guaranteed long term to secure and enhance public benefits; those that are not paid for at the till e.g. wildlife, carbon, water, access, landscape.
- The Secretary of State's speeches have praised upland shepherds but the Bill and Explanatory Notes provide no assurance that the farming systems that deliver our much loved landscapes will be supported. We seek a backstop to secure upland communities' traditional management systems where they enhance natural and cultural benefits.
- Landscape is not referenced but we know it is beautiful landscapes that primarily draw the 70 million visits to England's uplands each year.
- The Bill is silent on actively providing financial support to rural communities to grow and diversify; these communities require diverse economies to underpin public benefits
- The Bill fails to acknowledge the complexity of land tenure with multiple players operating on the same piece of land who all can contribute to public benefits

Our Asks for Amendments:

1. In 1(1)(c) add '*including farming systems where they underpin delivery after cultural and natural heritage*
2. 'Landscape' is added to s1(1)(a) after environment
3. In s1(2) add 'and rural development'.
4. A commitment to (as a minimum) secure the current level of funding to the uplands – perhaps ring fence money for our countryside as we do for Overseas Aid; £3 billion is only 0.4% of UK government expenditure.
5. Safeguards so landowners, tenants or commoners are all fairly rewarded for the benefits they provide on the same land.
6. Add 'respect' after understanding in 1(1)(b)

Find out more at uplandsalliance.com

The Uplands Alliance brings together many different organisations from all sectors that have a role to play in the future of England's Uplands environment. We firmly believe we can play a key role in building consensus and moving the debate towards positive action to ensure the Uplands continue to thrive.