



A Liberal Party Discussion Document

UK Farming and Food Security – a Personal Perspective from Devon.

The Liberal Party was grateful for the input from Cllr Roy Collins in the debate on the implications of changes to farming inheritance tax at the October 2025 Assembly.

A well-respected dairy farmer in Devon, he has compiled this discussion documents from his recollections and experience.

“Food security, there have been many disasters in the world caused by climate change, extreme weather patterns, war in countries and the loss of rainforest.

The Sahara Desert is expanding every year by 50 thousand acres, in Mongolia, there has been no rain for over two years now which is meant the herds of cattle, flocks of sheep and goats and yaks have significantly diminished.

In America 536,543 farms have finished that means 165,000,000 acres taken out of agricultural production. In Ukraine cattle, sheep and other livestock have been killed by Russian troops and left to rot, Ukraine pig farm numbers, dropped 11% in 2024 and in 20,25, another 25% drop.

In our country, 6365 farming or related businesses have gone in the last 12 months. This labour government is doing much harm to our farming community with its proposed inheritance tax. Defra’s own figures state that 66% of farms will be affected, taking at least 20% of everything they own, however many commentators put the percentages much higher, death tax is morally wrong

In all 26-sub related sector of businesses are based on farm production.

Last March 2025, the labour government pulled the plug on all new applicants for the Elms scheme and many other conservation schemes, which farmers and landowners could apply for. Previous country stewardship agreements will be coming to an end this autumn, farmers will be reverting back to intensive methods of production.

A report came out on the 9th of September 2025, saying that by 2050 nearly 25% of agricultural land in this country will disappear.

Kent Wildlife Trust has purchased a 400-acre arable farm to create one of the country’s most ambitious projects for re wilding. I know all about a 4000-acre estate in Sussex, which is also been rewilded. In Devon, Killerton estate which belongs to the National Trust was the former home of Richard Acland, who was liberal MP for Tiverton between 19 21, and 1939.

Best quality, vegetable growing land has been rewilded, a lot of it planted to woodland . The national trust has turned out many tenants to rewild the land or sold land to developers.

Much of Devon is being ruined by greedy planners carrying out government policies to provide homes for economic migrants. The government housing department is very pleased with the East Devon district council for planning a new town called Marlcombe. This will be built near Exeter Airport on mostly grade 2 lands, the most versatile, where agricultural land of about 1500 acres will be affected, this will be one of the 12 Newtown's government will be supporting with a big pot of money.

I have been opposing these plans for over two years. Now I understand the National Farmers Union are unhappy about the loss of this land and many of the other 11 new towns.

Farmers cannot produce food for the nation if you keep concreting and tarmacking over it.

Devon grows the best grass in the country for producing milk, beef and lamb. Grassland is highly efficient at retaining water, acting as a sponge and preventing soil erosion and flooding in high rainfall. Every acre of growing crops removes up to 4 times more harmful greenhouse gas than the average car produces.

Yet the Council for the Protection of Rural England state there is enough brownfield land in England to meet all government housing needs. There are more vacant homes, then homeless people worldwide.

In this country, we have 1 million empty homes, birth rates are falling. Why do we need more homes?

Counsellor Roy Collins

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