

# News story: Government and industry cement deal to give UK construction the edge

- Business Secretary announces flagship deal that could add billions of pounds in value to the UK economy through delivering better homes and infrastructure
- government will invest £170 million in the Transforming Construction programme with industry committed to match-funding with a £250 million investment
- the transformative [Sector Deal](#) will help modernise the industry and recruit and train the next generation of high-skilled construction workers
- deal will look to deliver a substantial boost to the skills of current workers and help retrain workers, alongside a new National Retraining Scheme

A transformative deal between government and the construction industry which could add billions of pounds to the economy has been announced by Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark today (29 November 2017).

Government and industry have worked extensively since the launch of the Industrial Strategy green paper to agree the Sector Deal, developing a joint strategic direction for the sector that reflects shared ambition to modernise the industry and to respond to the challenges of demographic change and Brexit.

The deal, announced in the [Industrial Strategy white paper](#) on Monday (27 November), will prepare the UK construction sector for the future, helping companies build better performing buildings and infrastructure at a greater speed and reduced cost, while supporting the government's ambitious programmes in both infrastructure and housing.

By transforming the sector through better adoption of digital and manufacturing technologies the Construction Sector Deal aims to deliver quality infrastructure and housing more quickly, and at reduced cost to the taxpayer, while boosting the skills of construction workers and training the next generation of workers.

Supported by £170 million of government investment over three years through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, and £250 million of match funding from industry, the deal will bring together the construction, manufacturing, energy and digital sectors in a new hub to commercialise technologies capable of building assets which are both cost effective and energy efficient.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

Our construction industry makes a vital contribution to the UK economy and is one of our most important sectors, with businesses that add £138 billion a year to the economy, contribute 8% of our GDP, and employ over 3.1 million workers.

The Sector Deal we have announced today will see government and industry working together to support, invest and transform the construction sector, creating high-skilled and well-paying jobs, while delivering more housing for people across the country.

The agreement embodies our vision for a modern Industrial Strategy, with government and industry working together in a strategic partnership towards the common goal of higher productivity, and a more skilled construction workforce with more earning power.

Andrew Wolstenholme, Chair of the [Construction Leadership Council](#), said:

I am delighted that construction has been included in the first wave of sector deals. It presents a huge opportunity for one of the UK's largest industries and the broader economy.

With a projected £600 billion pipeline of infrastructure projects to be delivered over the coming decades, it is vital that the industry and government work together to realise the full potential of the deal.

We have a golden opportunity to reap economic gains from improved productivity and the more efficient construction of assets, creating high-skilled, well-paid jobs in all parts of the UK and driving up exports to the global infrastructure market.

Tony Meggs, Chief Executive of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) said:

This government has ambitious plans for infrastructure over the next decade. It is vital that the construction sector is modern and efficient in the way it delivers these plans. Only then will we see future investment continue to flow and make progress in closing the UK's productivity gap.

The IPA very much supports this Construction Sector Deal; we will support and align with industry as it implements the programme.

## **Approach to skills**

The announcement follows the launch of the Industrial Strategy white paper yesterday by the Business Secretary, setting out a long-term plan for how Britain can build on its economic strengths, address its productivity

challenge, positively embrace technological change, and support businesses and its workers.

With a clear emphasis on building skills for the future, the deal commits the sector to adopting a new strategic approach to skills development, ensuring that standards and qualifications for the skills needed, now and in the future, are developed, and industry is able to use all sources of funding effectively. This will deliver:

- a reformed [Construction Industry Training Board](#), with greater industry leadership and engagement, focused on delivering future skills needs – particularly amongst SMEs
- a co-ordinated approach to maximising the benefits of the [Apprenticeship Levy](#) – creating new apprenticeship trailblazers, and increasing the number of construction apprentices
- a unified and more effective industry approach to promoting construction careers, and removing barriers to employment in the industry; this help the sector to recruit, train and retain a more diverse workforce, with higher levels of professional and technical levels, and management skills

Through the Sector Deal the industry will also be working with government to produce a Construction Skills Strategy aimed at retaining and retraining a workforce that is fit for the future and able to deliver on the government's infrastructure and housing ambitions.

To help upskill construction workers and retrain them in new valuable skills, the government announced in its Industrial Strategy white paper that it would be launching a new National Retraining Scheme that will help make sure workers have the right skills to match employer's needs, beginning with a £64 million investment for digital and construction training.

Government has also set out its ambition to make the UK's technical education system as prestigious as its higher education. In the recently published T level action plan, government announced that construction will be one of the first of 4 T levels to be taught from 2020.

## **Sector Deal objectives**

With the sector focused on delivering on these 3 key themes, the deal has 4 clear objectives that it is committed to achieving by 2025:

- 33% reduction in the cost of construction and the whole life cost of assets
- 50% reduction in the time taken from beginning-to-end of new build and refurbished assets
- 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment
- 50% reduction in the trade gap between total exports and total imports of construction products and materials

## Centre for Digital Built Britain Programme

Government has also today announced the launch of the Centre for Digital Built Britain at the University of Cambridge. The new centre, which forms part of the 'Transforming Construction' Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund investment, will develop Building Information Modelling (BIM), sensors, data analytics and smart systems technologies that can be embedded in new building projects.

The Centre for Digital Built Britain Programme, first announced in the 2016 budget, will deliver reductions in whole-life costs and carbon emissions of buildings, whilst improving construction productivity and capacity by using intelligent building information models, sensing technology and secure data and information infrastructure.

## Building for 2050

Government is also investing £1.4 million in a research project called 'Building for 2050'. Led by AECOM, this project is gathering evidence from 3 housing developments located in Swansea, Bristol and Manchester with the aim of uncovering the barriers to developing low cost, low carbon housing.

The project will test innovative methods of construction and will involve working closely with households throughout the project to track their views, and to report on progress as we seek to reduce the environmental impact of UK homes by 2050.

Full details of the Sector Deal agreement between industry and government will be published on GOV.UK in the coming weeks.

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## [Press release: 'Names' top the list for those wishing for a personalised registration this Christmas](#)

The DVLA spoke to around 1,000 motorists to get their thoughts on personalised registrations for cars. Whilst names or nicknames topped the list, registrations that represented a business were also a popular choice. This was followed by registrations that represented a favourite sports team or pet.

1 in 10 of those surveyed who had a personalised registration had received it as a gift.

Currently, the top most wanted registrations searched for on the [DVLA](#)

[Personalised Registrations](#) website include BE11 CKY and SB51 MON.

[DVLA's Personalised Registrations](#) has over 50 million registrations available to buy online and if customers purchase by 15 December the registration will arrive in time for Christmas.

Whilst some personalised registration numbers can sell at auction for hundreds of thousands of pounds, those looking for gifts on a smaller budget will find registrations starting at just £250.

Jody Davies, DVLA Personalised Registrations' Senior Sales Manager, said:

With names topping the list of preferred personalised registrations we know that people value the thought that goes into the gift. Using our website's search facility customers can try different combinations to find the perfect gift for the motorist.

And with over 50 million registrations available there's plenty of opportunity to be creative and snap up a plate in time for Christmas.

Personalised registrations can be bought [online](#) 24 hours a day. A dedicated team can also help customers find the registration they want over the phone by ringing 0300 123 0883. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 4.30pm.

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## **Speech: "The UK stands ready to support the region's work to bring an end to the conflict and suffering in South Sudan"**

Mr President, time and time again, we have voiced our despair at the depths of the suffering of the people of South Sudan. The scale of the numbers is deeply shocking: one third of the population have been forced to flee their homes and more than half the population lack enough food to feed themselves and their families. And yet, the parties to the conflict, including the Government, continue to mount offensives on innocent civilians. They are deaf to the misery of their own people. It is more important than ever that the international community shows the people of South Sudan that we will act together to work for peace, even if South Sudan's leaders will not.

Innocent civilians continue to pay the price for the failures of the political elite, but President Kiir's long overdue decree ordering safe

passage for humanitarian agencies is welcome. We hope that this will result in real improvements in getting assistance to those that so desperately need it. Because physical restrictions, whether resolved or not, represent just the tip of the iceberg, as bureaucratic impediments including costly registration fees, and delays in receiving permits, prevent humanitarians from reaching those most in need.

Like others, we are extremely concerned that UNMISS continues to face significant restrictions of movement, including restrictions imposed by Government forces. We are particularly troubled by a disturbing trend of harassment, threats and physical assault of UN staff. This must stop immediately. Those responsible will be judged by their actions, not their words.

Mr President, South Sudan is at a cross roads. Its leaders are being offered a last chance to commit to peace and demonstrate that they care for their people and their country. They have repeatedly failed to do so. Too many times ceasefires have been declared while gunshots continue to ring out. But IGAD's Revitalisation Forum offers hope for the people of South Sudan, and I would like to reiterate the UK's full support for this process and to thank both IGAD and the African Union for their hard work over recent months. IGAD foreign ministers and the Special Envoy have actively reached out to both the elites and civil society across the region as part of their revitalization process. The UK stands ready to support the region's work to bring an end to the conflict and suffering in South Sudan, and we welcome the African Union Peace and Security Council's clearly worded communiqué of the 22 of September 2017.

The international community must use the full range of options to ensure that all parties meaningfully and constructively engage. This cannot be an open-ended process that allows more delays, leading to more suffering for the people of South Sudan. As the African Union communiqué says, it must be clear that this is a final chance and that there will be consequences for not engaging. As a Council, we should commit to return to this issue early in the new year in order to consider whether we have seen enough progress, whether there are individuals or parties who are blocking peace, and be ready to take appropriate action if so.

Given the fragile situation in South Sudan, we are concerned that the Government is considering running elections next year. There is no possibility that the conditions for good elections will be in place next year. Seeking to hold them when the conditions are not right is likely to drive further conflict. As the African Union and IGAD have set out, the timelines in the Peace Agreement must be revised to allow for a conducive environment for holding elections. The National Dialogue must be held in support of the Revitalisation of the Peace Agreement; it cannot provide a solution in itself.

Mr President, I want to conclude by reiterating our plea to the leaders of South Sudan: Stop the violence and engage meaningfully in the revitalisation process. Stop blocking and impeding UNMISS and the Regional Protection Force. Stop attacks against UN and humanitarian workers. And stop denying

humanitarian aid from reaching your people. You are starving them to death.

Mr President, South Sudan is at a cross roads. We should do all that we can to support the region's efforts to ensure its leaders choose the right path.

Thank you.

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## Speech: "Let us stand together as an international community in our commitment to eliminate the abhorrent crime of modern slavery and human trafficking"

Thank you Mr President and thank you to the briefers for updating us following the disturbing news footage we all saw last week showing migrants being sold into slavery in Libya. Today let us stand together as an international community in our commitment to eliminate the abhorrent crime of modern slavery and human trafficking, and safeguard the lives and dignity of those who are most vulnerable.

Like many Libyans in-country, I share the disgust and grave concern at the news footage from last week. I am deeply concerned that civilians continue to suffer inexcusably from the conflict in Libya and that in the absence of the rule of law, they can suffer human rights abuses of the worst kind. I welcome the announcement by the Government of National Accord of Libya of an immediate investigation into this matter and its commitment to ensure that those involved are brought to justice and this vile practice is stopped.

We reaffirm our support – working alongside Libya and international efforts – to bring to account those responsible for such crimes. And we encourage all Member States to continue to work with Libyan authorities in pursuing allegations of human rights abuses to ensure that those individuals responsible are held to account.

After several debates, the Security Council is well informed of the challenges we face in tackling unmanaged migration, including through Libya. We are aware of the real vulnerability of migrants to trafficking and modern slavery. We want migration to be safe, legal and well-managed. We have discussed the need for a comprehensive approach, addressing the root causes of migration, as well as their consequences. And with resolutions 2331 and 2388, we are now well equipped to take action.

Instability creates a permissive environment in which criminal networks

exploit civilians and migrants and operate trafficking networks for their own gains, including through the illegal detention of migrants. We will continue to support the Libyan authorities to improve conditions in the centres currently under their control, and to establish oversight of remaining ungoverned centres.

This Council has seen recent progress to revitalise the Libyan political process and take steps forward to stabilising the country. We are clear that the human rights situation in Libya can only be improved sustainably under the stability of a united and representative Government. A safe, secure and prosperous Libya that is able to confidently tackle the challenges in the region is in all our interests and we continue to support the UN's Action Plan for Libya.

We must all recognise that it is not only the trafficked individuals and their loved ones that are directly affected by this horrendous crime. Violent extremists profit financially from this trade in human misery and use it to fund terrorist activity that affects us all. We must integrate our understanding of trafficking and modern slavery with our efforts to combat terrorism and we must eradicate the use of slavery as a means to resource terrorist groups.

Human rights monitoring and capacity-building of police are central to efforts to build stability and address trafficking by field missions. And, more broadly, we should consider how anti-trafficking is part of a Sustaining Peace agenda, which is all about using a cross-section of UN tools to prevent conflict and build peace. It is clear that trafficking itself can only be addressed through a holistic, cross-pillar approach by the UN.

As is always the case with today's frantic news cycles, the reports from Libya which have so shocked us all will soon be displaced by other headlines and drop off the news agenda altogether eventually. While that is to be expected, we should hold ourselves to a higher standard of responsibility: The fact that slavery continues in the 21st century despite all the progress that has been made in defending human rights is reprehensible. Let us commit to work together to preserve our attention on this issue and sustain our action to ensure this practice does not continue in Libya or anywhere else. It is only by doing so that we can hope to succeed in the maintenance of international peace and security. Mr President if members of this council consider a statement would be helpful then we would be happy to work with them on such a text.

Thank you.

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**Speech: Environment Secretary speech:**



# CLA Rural Business Conference

## Introduction

I wanted to begin by reflecting on the past. The CLA has been around for around 110 years now. And as I'm sure every single person in this room knows, the CLA was originally founded following the publication of a pamphlet called the 'Land and the Social Problem' by a man called Algernon Tumor. Now, Algernon had been a private Secretary to Benjamin Disraeli when he was Prime Minister. In that pamphlet in 1907 he argued that British agriculture was going through a time of huge change. Of course the political backdrop at that time was a debate about whether or not we should pursue more free trade agreements with countries in far flung regions or whether we should integrate more closely with our European partners. And at the same time as Algernon was making the case for this period of change he also excoriated politicians for their failure to show provide sufficient leadership when it came to charting a clear course for those who own, manage and work on the land. How very different things are, 110 years on. I think the role that you in the CLA have played for over a hundred years has been wonderful. You have been leading the debate over how we use our oldest and most precious national asset – our land. In the face of social, political, economic and technological change, the CLA has always been pioneering new ideas, you have supported imaginative approaches to land management, you've helped us to sustain the rural economy, growing health, guaranteed employment for hundreds of thousands and you continue to shape a progressive future for the countryside.

I want to say a particular thanks to Ross Murray for his leadership and Tim Breitmeyer for his continuing leadership. You are uniquely fortunate in having two such distinguished individuals who understand the reality of the rural economy, who speak with authority and such candour to those in power and are an asset to this country and also to you, the membership of the CLA.

Even in the brief opportunity I had to mix with some of you after lunch earlier, I was again struck by the way in which CLA members lean in. The way in which CLA members embrace the future. When I was talking to Ed Barnston earlier about the work he is doing in south Cheshire I was struck by the fact that he is ambitious for the future investing in an increasing determination to grow and produce more high quality food. And when I was talking to Peverel Manners, I was struck by his desire to clock up the air miles, go out to Australia and further afield to ensure that Great British produce was on foreign kitchen tables. It is that degree of ambition for the future which has always characterised the CLA and one thing that will always be true about land ownership and land management in this country is that we need to be ambitious for the future when it comes to continuing to produce the very best food and drink in the world. Because demand for British food has never been higher.

## Food and drink

Our exports now surpass £20 billion for the first time, up by nearly 10% on

the last year. That growth has been built on the reputation for quality built by people in this room.

And we know, that the food chain brings £110 billion to the UK economy. Food and drink is our biggest manufacturing sector. That is why I am so delighted that in the Industrial Strategy published by my colleague Greg Clark yesterday recognised the vital importance of food and drink, with a new Food and Drink Sector Council. This Council will help pair the way for a for a food and drink sector deal in order to ensure that responsibility for effectively marketing and supporting primary producers and others is at the heart of the government's industrial strategy.

When we talk about the industrial strategy it is important to recognise that we are not just world leaders in the way in which food and drink has grown as an export in the course of the last couple of years. We are world leaders in terms of quality. We have the world's highest animal welfare standards, we are moving towards having the world's most ambitious environmental goals and also embedding the most rigorous approach towards sustainability,

All these are good in themselves but it is also the case that they can provide us with an advantage in the marketplace for food and drink. Increasingly consumers – not just in this country but across the world – are demanding higher quality food. Consumers want to know more about the meat they buy, the milk they drink, the provenance of their vegetables, the carbon cost of production, the weight of the footprint left on the planet by particular farming methods and the circumstances under which animals were reared during their lives. Not to mention the way in which their lives end.

The more specific the story we can tell about the care invested in the food we produce the more we actually reinforce our competitive edge. Because if we make quality our hallmark we can secure farming's future.

So when it comes to finding an edge in an ever more competitive world of food and drink, we need to recognise its in goods recognised for their exceptional quality and special distinctive provenance that will become market leaders.

Let me give you one example. As I was searching for an example I was spoilt for choice, thinking about producers in this room who have shown how provenance and quality can give you a marketing edge. So I didn't want to favour anyone by making them teacher's pet. I wanted to choose an example not relevant to anyone in this room but very close to my heart. Whisky.

When I was growing up whisky was produced – in industrial quantities – using industrial methods – for an industrious population – that meant that when you bought your Whyte and Mackay or Bell's or Black and White it was pretty much the same product, the differentiation was price.

Now, whisky is sold more and more not on the basis of price but provenance, not cost but quality. Instead of relying on industrially-produced blends, the Scottish whisky trade is moving to carefully crafted single malts, with water drawn from particular springs, peatiness inculcated from particular islands and delicate flavour notes imparted by ancient sherry or port barrels for the

fastest market growth.

And Since 2000 there has been a 218% increase by volume and a 415% increase by value in malt whisky exports. The Macallan, Glenlivet, Glenfiddich, Laphroaig and others have become global brands. All by stressing their local, and artisan, origins.

I believe that by stressing the local and the distinctive, whether its lamb or beef, cheese or bacon, cider or beer, bread or jam, that products will become the best in the world. The more the story behind the product speaks of provenance and tradition, attention to quality, respect for the environment and the highest ethical standards, the bigger the commercial opportunity for all of us.

But if we are to continue to strengthen our position as a world leader in quality food production we need to concentrate not just on provenance but also on productivity.

Productivity and technology

And that means investing in the technology of the future.

Today you have already heard from the world-leading academics at Harper Adams University. On a recent visit there I saw for myself the ground-breaking work that they are undertaking.

From the fit-bit for cows that tracks their health and diet, to the 'hands-free hectare' technology, these latest advances will shape farming in the future and also demand of the next generation of farmers a familiarity with robotics and data analytics alongside an understanding of animal husbandry and soil health.

We are on the cusp of a new agricultural revolution.

There is a critical role for Government to play. We need to support the innovation that you will use to reshape agriculture. Scientific breakthroughs in other countries in areas as diverse as nuclear, biotech and digital have been stimulated by Government investment and government ambition.

There is no reason why Britain cannot be the world leader in drone technology, robotics, laser treatment of weeds and pests, the deployment of big data, and also responsible genomics. All of these have the capacity to improve productivity and enable environmental enhancement. And I hope to say more in coming days about how we will advance these technologies.

Of course, we already help farmers, landowners and rural entrepreneurs through the Rural Development Programme, which is supporting thousands of projects in areas as diverse as innovative cheese making and also the deployment of artificial intelligence. Funding is granted to ideas that improve productivity, generate growth and provide additional jobs in rural areas.

Today I am pleased to announce that applications for grants from a further

£45 million will open this Thursday, 30th November. Grants will be awarded to projects that support business development, food processing and, in addition, rural tourism infrastructure projects.

Recently, we have also put £60 million into the Countryside Productivity scheme, which makes large grants for projects that add value to farm produce and improve farming productivity. This money can also be used to buy tools like precision slurry application equipment, which reduces ammonia emissions, delivers savings on fertiliser and ultimately helps the environment.

Tools like this are exactly what we want to support when we say you can boost productivity and enhance the environment at the same time. And that brings me to the final and most fundamental aspect of a successful rural economy: environmental stewardship.

As custodians of the landscape, farmers know, and have known for centuries what the rest of us are only just beginning to properly appreciate: without a healthy environment we have nothing.

To take just one example from many, over the last 200 years we have lost 84% of our fertile peat topsoil in East Anglia. It is estimated that what remains, unless we take action, could be eradicated in the next 30-60 years. The rate at which vast stores of carbon held in these soils is being lost is nothing short of an emergency. We know that in many cases this damage is due to the short-term thinking which governed past patterns of intensive agricultural activity.

We know that 95% of food production relies on healthy soil, antibiotics come from soil, a quarter of the world's biodiversity comes from soil, so it is clear that we need to think and act together more sustainably. To everyone in this room, soil is a fundamental asset and its degradation costs us money. So Defra must, in its future agricultural support funding prioritise the health of our soils.

History teaches us that civilisations can survive incredible challenges. Coups, revolutions, secession from empires, all these are survivable, sometimes even beneficial, but one change is fatal. The degradation of our environment. We have only one set of natural resources. We have to protect them and manage them sustainably to make sure our children can enjoy their fruits. No country can withstand the loss of its soil.

At Defra we have made a commitment to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. And if we want a better environment we must protect all our habitats, enhance our biodiversity and safeguard the beauty of all our rural landscapes. And it is for that reason we said we will change the way in which we invest in our countryside. The public money which we, rightly, allocate to land owners to help them manage the land is there, ultimately, to secure public goods. And the pre-eminent public good is environmental enhancement.

We all know that the current system of support for farmers and landowners shaped by the Common Agricultural Policy is inefficient, ineffective,

inequitable and environmentally harmful.

The environmental damage generated under the CAP has been striking. EU-inspired systems of agricultural production have damaged our soil.

CAP-inspired and sponsored methods of agricultural production in the UK have led to soil degradation which costs us £1.2 billion a year according to Cranfield University.

The damage is more than just towards soil. Since we joined the EU the number of farmland birds has declined by 54% while the populations of priority species overall have declined by 33%.

And also, in recent years, intensive agricultural production systems of the kind driven by the CAP have reduced the numbers of pollinators. With a 49% decline in some specific bee populations, scarcely mitigated by a 29% increase in others.

All of this has happened under a system where the majority of financial support allocated to farmers and landowners has come under "Pillar One" of the CAP and has all been related to the size of productive agricultural land-holding rather than any wider benefit.

And even though Pillar One funding has recently been changed to incorporate explicit environmental goods – the greening of CAP, the evidence that Pillar One funding encourages genuine environmental improvement is slight. In a recent paper by Alan Matthews for the RISE Foundation he pointed out that Pillar One funding had done little to improve land use.

"The maintenance of permanent grassland requirement and the crop diversification obligation have led to minimal changes in land use, and the fact that the great majority of land enrolled in EFAs is used for productive options are pointers to that the additional environmental benefits, relative to the pre-greening baseline are likely to be low"

The lion's share of current support for land owners is, clearly, inefficiently allocated. It does not secure the public goods the public wants and needs if you want to provide resilient habitats, richer wildlife, healthier rivers and cleaner water, trees and peatland to absorb carbon and provide a home to precious species.

We do know, however, that, public money, properly allocated through agri-environment or environmental land management schemes, can secure significant gains.

Analysis of how farms in one particular set of Higher Level Stewardship schemes have done over the years are encouraging. There is no perfect single measure of biodiversity but the Farmland Bird Index is one of the best. And it has shown that in farms operating countryside stewardship schemes there has been an increase in the Farmland Bird Index of up to 165% even as the numbers nationally were in decline by 24%.

Effective environmental land management schemes can do so much to protect our countryside. It can help protect moorland and heathland, encourage tree

planting and wildflower meadows, mitigate the impact of flooding and climate change, improve water quality and lock in improved soil health and fertility. But it is still the case that of the money we allocate from Defra to the CAP, only around one fifth of the goes on environmental land management schemes, around 80% goes on the inefficient and ineffective pillar one payments.

I believe that has to change. And I know that one of the major reasons why there has been such a relatively low take-up of appropriate environmental land management schemes so far has been the dreadful way in which we in Government have actually administered them. Natural England does many many good things but I have to say that Natural England and Defra scarcely deserve medals for the operation and administration of the Countryside Stewardship scheme.

That is why I have asked Andrew Sells, Natural England's brilliant Chairman, and James Cross, The Natural England Chief Executive, working with the Rural Payments Agency, to overhaul delivery of the scheme. The first part of that reform is a simplification of the application process and the creation of four new, hopefully much more streamlined offers, which I hope will be routes to securing support. These changes will, I hope, encourage more land owners and managers to adopt stewardship schemes but I, and the leadership team at Natural England, know there is still much more to be done.

Because as everyone here knows – if we can get more investment in environmental land management schemes we can generate more economic growth. Studies of rural development spending have shown that schemes with an environmental focus have a very good return on investment, with each pound spent generating £3 in return. Natural capital analysis shows that the priority habitats which environmental land management schemes protect and enhance provide more than a billion pounds of economic benefit every year. And, of course, that investment, properly directed, also helps support food production. Wildflower margins which attract bees and other insects not only help pollination they also attract the predators who deal effectively with crop pests.

In addition, as everyone here will also know, rural tourism is a vital, and inevitably growing, element in driving rural economic growth and wise environmental land management is critical to encouraging that tourism. Whether people are drawn by the chance to see rare flora and fauna, enjoy green space, appreciate the wild and untamed, follow traditional country pursuits or go glamping within easy reach of a gastropub, the quality of the environment is a critical factor in bringing visitors, and money, into the countryside. The consultancy GHK has estimated that 60% of rural tourism is dependent on high quality landscape and wildlife, generating around 5 billion pounds a year and supporting at the moment nearly 200,000 jobs.

## Conclusion

As we prepare to leave the European Union we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to refashion how the state supports farming, what we pay landowners and what we want from the land.

Government I believe has a vital role to play. It's our role to champion food production, it's our role to help you invest in new technology and it's our role to pay you if you enhance the environment. Because ultimately our landscapes are beautiful and special not because the state or any Minister decrees it so but because those, you, who work on the land love what you do and where you work. Which is why we in government are grateful to all of you. Thank you.