

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Open Spaces Port Health & Environmental Services	
<b>Subject:</b> Agriculture Bill and Fisheries Bill	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Remembrancer <b>Report Author:</b> Philip Saunders	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>Both Bills are prompted by the UK's departure from the EU. The Agriculture Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• makes provision to replicate funding currently provided by the EU's Common Agricultural Policy</li> <li>• makes substantial changes to the way in which public funding for agriculture will be assessed</li> </ul> <p>The Bill is of interest to the City in relation to certain activities in open spaces.</p> <p>The Fisheries Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sets out a framework for rules about the licensing of fishing boats, unauthorised catches of sea fish and fish stock conservation. The Bill is not of direct interest to the City Corporation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended contents of this Report are noted.</li> </ul>	

## Main Report

### Background

1. Describing the aims of the Agriculture Bill, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said "Every measure in the Bill is designed to ensure that our farmers receive the support that they deserve to give us the healthy food that we enjoy and the beautiful rural environment on which we all depend". He told MPs that during the consultation ahead of the Bill "not one of the submissions we received requested that the CAP status quo should remain". Defining 'public good' for the purposes of the Bill, he said it was "about clean air, soil quality and making sure that we invest in carbon sequestration, that farmers get supported for the work that they do

to keep our rivers clean and our water pure, that the public have access to our glorious countryside and that the contribution that farmers make to animal health and welfare is recognised. We all benefit from those public goods, but, at the moment, our farmers are not adequately rewarded for them”.

2. Gove’s Labour shadow, Sue Hayman, said her party “absolutely agrees with the need to shift financial assistance in the way proposed by the Bill, from support for simply owning land to the principle of public money for public good to help those who work our land to restore and improve the natural environment. This has been rightly welcomed by environmental campaigners as a real turnaround in the Government’s thinking. I join those campaigners in applauding the Secretary of State in this regard”. The Bill did not, however, go sufficiently far on three areas: targets for environmental improvements; a commitment to “producing healthy, home-grown food in a post-Brexit world”; and “protecting the people of this country from food poverty”.
3. Introducing the Fisheries Bill, Michael Gove garnered agreement across the House when he stated that “the common fisheries policy did damage. It did environmental damage to fish stocks and to our marine environment. It also did economic damage to the fishing industry, which has been such a critical part of this country’s heritage and which can again become a vital part of our economic future. The common fisheries policy did social damage as well, because coastal communities suffered. Their economies were hollowed out and businesses collapsed as a result of its operation”. The Bill provides, Gove explained, for the UK to be an independent coastal state from 2021.
4. Labour’s Sue Hayman supported the Bill’s broad aims and indicated her party would support the proposals. She protested, however, that the proposals did not go sufficiently far to ensure catch quotas were evenly spread amongst fishermen.

## **The Agriculture Bill**

2. The City Corporation cares for almost 12,000 acres of natural and historic open space. They include internationally important wildlife habitats, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves for the public to enjoy. In Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches the management of the ancient wood pasture landscape is undertaken in a way that is in keeping with its ecology built up over many centuries. In sympathy with ancient methods of woodland management, areas of trees are pollarded on a

rotating basis, so as to allow cattle to graze, thus reducing the impact on the land and maintaining delicate forest ecosystems.

5. Cattle are grazed because of the ecological and historic value they bring to the wood pasture landscape. The methods used to maintain and preserve Epping Forest have remained substantially the same for hundreds of years.
7. The Bill is an enabling Bill which creates many delegated powers. It sets out a framework for the UK's departure from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and for a replacement system based on the use of public money for 'public good'. It also makes provision for a change to 'farming' payments in the long term.

#### *Common Agricultural Policy*

8. CAP is a highly complex system of agricultural subsidy. In England, broadly stated, the resulting payments fall into 3 categories – basic payments, green, and young farmer. Basic payments are made direct, they are decoupled from production and are based on the hectares farmed. The amount changes depending on other payments such as those made under the green or young farmer categories. The full amount of direct payments is only made where the farmer complies with a range of other EU rules (eg on plant health, water resource protection and food safety).
9. The current arrangements under CAP will continue post-Brexit because the laws governing the scheme will become 'retained EU law'. In relation to the current subsidy framework, there will be a transition period of at least 7 years during which direct payments based on CAP will be phased out. The Bill creates a power for the Government to modify elements of the retained CAP regulations regarding the finance, control and reporting regime that applies across the CAP. The modification powers could, for example, allow the government to change elements of the inspection regime or system of penalties. The Bill creates powers to repeal EU aid schemes for fruit and vegetable producer organisations. The Bill clarifies that existing rural development payment schemes will continue (even if the overall rule framework were to change).

#### *Public Good payments*

10. The Government's aim is to move to a new Environmental Land Management Scheme which will make payments for 'public good' in farming and land management. Farmers are already familiar with

schemes such as the ones sketched in the Bill – the Countryside Stewardship scheme is one example. Given that the Bill creates only a high-level framework, details of the future schemes are not yet available.

11. The Bill provides a power that would allow the government to pay farm support in a lump sum so as, for example, to give a farmer the ability to make a substantial capital investment.
12. Reaction from farming organisations and environmental groups has been broadly supportive but some concerns have been expressed regarding the certainty of long-term funding arrangements.

### **The Fisheries Bill**

13. Under the Bill it is proposed that the existing rights of EU nations to access UK waters will be revoked and the UK will licence individual vessels from other nations. Ministers have repeatedly asserted that the Bill, similarly to the Agriculture Bill, will focus on conservation and environmental matters.
14. The Bill introduces a new system similar to the widely-commended system operated in New Zealand which will allow fishermen to catch and land ‘bycatch’ but, in relation to fish thrown back to the sea, there would be fines for exceeding throw-back limits. This provision is intended to gradually eliminate discards of fish, on a case-by-case basis, by avoiding and reducing, as far as possible, unwanted catches, and by gradually ensuring that catches are landed.

### **Consultation**

15. The Markets & Consumer Protection has been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

### **Conclusion**

16. Some City Corporation open spaces receive a relatively modest amount of EU funding which helps to support its environmental and farming management. Higher level stewardship payments form a substantial part of this funding in recognition of the sympathetic stewardship carried out by the City Corporation.
17. Given the Government’s commitment to continue to provide the same cash total in funds (approximately €4bn per year) for farm support across the UK until the end of this parliament, expected in 2022, it is not

anticipated that there will be any funding issues. Indeed, if the Bill's proposals to give greater weight to the quality of environmental stewardship are enacted, it is possible that the City's sensitive stewardship of its open spaces will receive additional government assistance. The City Corporation has given support to funding methodologies which recognise high-quality management of the landscape and promote care for ecologically important areas, land heritage and sensitive sites.

18. In relation to fisheries, the City Corporation's activities as the London Port Health Authority for the tidal Thames relate to the collection of shellfish and dispatch of the same to laboratories for testing.

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