

Name of representative/organisation:	Answers provided to questions from the Committee:
<p>David Chugg, Local Farmer and Deputy Chair of the National Farmers Union.</p>	
<p>1. How do you see the current state of agriculture in North Devon? What is its primary role and how do you think it contributes to the wider North Devon economy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farming is at the heart of rural communities in North Devon. • Farmers produce high quality, climate-friendly food, fuel, fibre and flowers while maintaining and enhancing our beautiful countryside, protecting some of our most valuable natural assets and providing the foundation for the country's largest manufacturing sector, food and drink. • Farmers are custodians of some of our most beautiful landscapes within North Devon, which attracts thousands of tourists every year. The Mental health benefits of access to our beautiful countryside are undeniable. • Farming provides employment not only to the farmer, but to all associated industries (feed suppliers, machinery dealers, mechanics, contractors, butchers etc)
<p>2. What are the challenges and how do you see they can be overcome?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer confidence is at an all-time low (NFU Farmer confidence survey 23/24) • Farmers are expected to produce (more) at the same time as impacting less • They are being pressed to deliver even more public goods, especially environmental • Increasingly expected to help deliver towards renewable targets • With the reduction in BPS, farmers are under huge financial pressure to continue to ensure their businesses are profitable. They must increasingly seek their returns from the market. • Rural crime puts an increasing burden on farmers, as there has been a rise in theft of equipment such as GPS and quad bikes. • The winter weather will have (and has had) a detrimental impact on crop and livestock production.

<p>3. What are the opportunities going forward for farming and what can farming contribute to the future of North Devon as a whole?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment – encouraging more young people to work within agriculture • Supporting the environment and the fight against climate change. The NFU has an ambition to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 - reducing our impact on the environment and increasing the production of green energy sources. • Utilising renewable energy sources. • The contribution towards the tourist industry cannot be underestimated – the green countryside attracts thousands each year. • Farmers often diversify to provide farm shops, attractions, and tourist accommodation (however poor market returns should not force farmers to do so)
<p>4. What can North Devon Council do to support the situation with agriculture in North Devon?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the Back British Farming message - In an increasingly volatile world, food production is vital to our country's health, wellbeing, and security • Promote the farming sector • Procure local produce (promoting and driving local, seasonal, and fresh food purchasing, by serving more local food in our hospitals and our schools) • Importantly, recognise that to stay competitive the industry must continue to adapt and invest. • Through the wider planning regime support good applications that deliver jobs and growth to the economy (either direct agriculture or diversified businesses) • Continue to push for better broadband provision in rural areas • Help to educate our young people about food production and taking care of the countryside • Support a growing agricultural contribution to renewable energy.