

<p><b>Name of representative/organisation:</b> Peter Delbridge, Mole Valley Farmers</p>	<p><b>Answers provided to questions from the Committee:</b></p>
<p><b>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?</b></p>	<p>Agriculture is starting to go through a massive change as a result of UK Policy following Brexit, and dynamics arising from turbulence of world economics and geo political tensions. Most farmers and their families would historically see themselves as food producers. Whilst this role is still considered very important, many also see the opportunity to scale back production and embark on environmental work, if the financial incentives are good enough.</p> <p>Whilst the number of people directly employed in agriculture may not fall off a cliff immediately, the number of people employed in ancillary industries, both up and down stream will be more dramatic.</p> <p>Like it or not a lot of what people in other sector value, such as tourism, owe so much to the farmed landscape that we all see and treasure. If the landscape changes dramatically, will that still be the case?</p>
<p><b>2. What are the challenges and how do you see they can be overcome?</b></p>	<p>There are many challenges on the horizon. One of the most pressing is succession. Farmers like everyone are getting older, and with the help of the NHS are farming longer. There is not enough young folks around!</p> <p>As rural affordable housing seems to be getting scarcer, should the council be charging full community tax on people employed in agriculture, especially the younger ones.</p>

	<p>Input prices have become very volatile in the past 10 years, and despite food inflation being widely reported in many cases the income being passed back the dysfunctional supply chain has not given adequate returns back to the primary producer. Group buying and selling would help by giving farmers a bit more power by giving them scale.</p>
<p><b>3. What are the opportunities going forward for farming and what can farming contribute to the future of North Devon as a whole?</b></p>	<p>Current Agricultural policy towards green policies will allow farmers to diversify their businesses. Whether that will result in an increase in employment overall is debatable.</p>
<p><b>4. What can North Devon Council do to support the situation with agriculture in North Devon?</b></p>	<p>As all politicians barely think beyond their electoral cycle, it would be great if the council really put in some thinking of what is required for the next 10 or twenty years.</p> <p>Since grassland [and permanent grass in particular] is a good carbon sink, it would be good if the council realised the rearing of livestock in North Devon is very sustainable and resisted the temptation to jump on the vegan/ vegetarian band wagon.</p>

