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## Your Parliamentary Update: The next chapter

Since our last update in June the political situation has remained a turbulent one, and any return through the autumn to a sense of normality will doubtless be welcomed across the country. Regardless of any political tumult the Countryside Alliance remains steadfast in our advocacy for the rural way of life, and we hope we can remain a trusted source of information, advice and support.

We look forward to working with Defra's new ministerial team.

### **Help us raise awareness and understanding of rural crime**

The 2022 Countryside Alliance [Rural Crime Survey](#) has been launched, aiming once again to highlight the challenges rural communities face from criminality. We are keen to secure as broad a set of perspectives as possible, so would welcome your help with publicising it to your constituents and contacts.

Over the years our survey has shown that those living and working in rural communities often feel that the police do not take rural crime seriously, despite it rising up the national agenda over the last few years. The results of the 2021 Countryside Alliance Rural Crime Survey built on the previous year's survey and showed that nine in ten people had not seen a police officer in the last week, and seven in ten people felt that crime had increased over the past 12 months.

### **Support the Countryside Alliance Awards and help celebrate rural businesses**

We are most grateful to those Members who have already helped us recognise and celebrate the successes of the most exceptional rural businesses in their local areas by highlighting and nominating for the 16th annual [Countryside Alliance Awards](#). Nominations are closing soon, so if you haven't done so already please consider [issuing a press release](#) in support of the Awards or [nominating directly](#) one or more of your local businesses. [Other useful resources](#) are also available.

The Countryside Alliance Awards celebrate rural businesses that go the extra mile, support their local economy and are the unsung heroes in every community. We hope you will be willing to support them in turn. We will be writing to all MPs with winners in their constituencies.

### **Our response to the Autumn Statement**

The Countryside Alliance has [responded in full](#) to the Chancellor's Autumn Statement. Heavily trailed as a proclamation of doom, there was much within this Autumn Statement to offer relief to rural Britain. Principally the capital budget has been protected, meaning no change to current plans to continue the rollout of the better broadband and 5G connections that are so vital for rural businesses and households, and the continuation of levelling-up funding that the Countryside Alliance has consistently argued must account fully for rural needs.

Looking ahead to the next Budget the Countryside Alliance anticipates campaigning to maintain the current reduced rate of fuel duty, and ideally cut it further still, so that rural residents reliant on cars in the absence of viable public transport can keep moving.

### **Rural business APPG consulting on cost of living**

The APPG for Rural Business and the Rural Powerhouse [is consulting](#) on a range of areas of pressure experienced by rural communities as a result of the escalating cost of living. Areas of inquiry include the general impact of rising costs on consumers and businesses, impacts on employment, housing and energy costs, and in addition to the written consultation it is holding a series of evidence sessions. The consultation closes on 25 November and the Countryside Alliance has [responded in full](#).

### **A look back to the Party Conference season**

Following the sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II our plans to attend this year's Liberal Democrat Party Conference regrettably had to be cancelled along with the conference itself, but we returned to the Labour and Conservative Party Conferences with a series of events addressing the big, structural issues affecting the British countryside.

At the [Labour Party Conference](#) our event, *Sustaining Rural Communities in the Carbon Trading Age*, hosted Shadow Defra Minister Daniel Zeichner MP, Abi Kay, the News Editor of the Farmers Guardian, Eleanor Langford, Curation Editor for PoliticsHome and The House magazine and Hywell Lloyd, founder member of Labour: Coast & Country. The discussion centred on how rural communities can remain sustainable at a time when land is increasingly being diverted away from productive agricultural use to support decarbonisation policies such as solar farms and tree planting for the sake of carbon abatement.

Our programme then continued with three events in Birmingham at the [Conservative Party Conference](#) which included one repeating the theme of the Labour event in front of a new audience and another on how the Conservatives might re-engage with its rural base. The third was our annual reception in conjunction with the Conservative Rural Forum. Guest speakers at the event included the then-Secretary of State Ranil Jayawardena MP; Farming Minister Mark Spencer MP; Chairman of the EFRA Select Committee Sir Robert Goodwill MP; MPs Greg Smith, Fay Jones, Sir Bill Wiggin and Robbie Moore; Sam Hall, the Director of the Conservative Environment Network, and James Heale of the Spectator.

For recent parliamentary briefings from the Countryside Alliance, please [click here](#).



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