**COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE**

**Q & A**

**ANDREA LEADSOM**

In the wake of the Conservative leadership race, our Chairman Simon Hart MP, wrote to the candidates with 10 questions of current interest to people in the countryside. We have published below the response from Andrea Leadsom who, following her decision to drop out of the leadership race, today (14 July) was appointed as the new Environment Secretary by Prime Minister Theresa May.



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **10 Key Questions** | **Andrea Leadsom** |  |
| Do you stand by the Prime Minister’s commitment to a broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) with the ambition to give people the legal right to request a connection to broadband with speeds of 10 Mbps, no matter where they live? | Yes |  |
| Will you commit to a review of the Rural Services Delivery Grant, which is paid to the most rural local authorities to recognise the additional costs of delivering services in rural areas, to ensure that rural areas are not disadvantaged? | Yes |  |
| Will you ensure that current levels of Single Farm Payment support for farmers provided under the Common Agricultural Policy will be maintained? | I have made it clear that I will guarantee the current level of support under a UK Agricultural Policy. |  |
| Can you confirm that you will not seek to alter the existing levels of protection afforded to the environment by Natura 2000 sites, such as SPA and SACs, which alongside SSSIs are key to reversing the decline of wildlife and habitats in the UK? | I have no plans to change current levels of protection. We will tailor our Environment Policy to our own landscape and wildlife. |  |
| Will you ensure that Government policy and other legal activities can be undertaken in the countryside without interference, and that local communities do not face intimidation? | I will ensure that the law is upheld, particularly for those implementing Government policy. |  |
| Do you support Sir Edward Garnier’s amendment to the Policing and Crime Bill to give individual police officers the power to remove face coverings from protestors? | I recognise that this is a serious problem and I am happy to look at measures to address it. |  |
| Can you assure the 650,000 holders of shotgun and firearms certificates that there will be no undue restrictions on legitimate ownership and use? | I have no plans to change the current regime. |  |
| Can you confirm that any unjustified restrictions introduced in the current review of the EU Firearms Directive will not be introduced into UK legislation? | EU directives will be replaced by UK legislation once we take control. Future UK policy will be drafted in consultation with UK interested parties. |  |
| Can you confirm that there will be no unjustified constraints on wildlife management practices, including restrictions on the list of legal quarry? | I have no plans to change the current arrangements. |  |
| Can you confirm that you are opposed to the Hunting Act and that a commitment to resolve this injustice will remain in any future manifesto? | I have always supported country sports and will stand by the manifesto on this issue. |  |