

Written statement submitted for ACT Rural Hustings held on 27th June 2024

Good evening, everyone. My name is Matty Jackman, and I am your Conservative candidate for Westmorland and Lonsdale.

For those who don't know me, I grew up in Grasmere. I have gone to school here, worked here, and now wish to represent our home down in Westminster. I serve in the Army Reserve, volunteer as a First Responder, and work in the Defence sector. **Westmorland and Lonsdale is my home.**

As we gather here tonight, it's crucial to highlight the importance of our rural communities and the vital role they play in our nation's fabric.

Only the Conservatives truly understand the unique challenges faced by these communities, and we are committed to preserving our rural ways of life and backing our farmers.

Let me share with you some key initiatives that we have planned to support and strengthen our rural areas.

First, we are **committed to increasing the agriculture budget by the rate of inflation, providing an additional £1 billion over the next Parliament.** This significant increase ensures our farmers receive the necessary funding to maintain and enhance their operations; keeping pace with the evolving needs of the agricultural sector.

We also recognise **food security is national security.** To this end, we are setting a legal target to enhance food security across the country. This initiative ensures that our nation can rely on a stable and secure food supply, reducing our dependence on external sources and safeguarding against potential disruptions.

Flooding is another critical issue affecting many rural communities in Westmorland and Lonsdale. We are allocating £5.2 billion to support communities impacted by flooding. These funds will be used to implement effective flood prevention and mitigation measures, protecting homes, businesses, and farmlands from the devastating effects of floods.

In terms of housing, we are prioritising the construction of new homes on brownfield land to protect our precious green spaces. This approach not only preserves our rural landscapes but also ensures that development is sustainable and benefits local communities.

Energy efficiency is a significant concern for many rural households. To address this, we are providing £378 million in grants for rural areas. These grants will help improve energy efficiency in homes, reducing household bills and promoting environmental sustainability.

Finally, we are launching a 'Buy Local' support initiative to encourage consumers to support local farmers and food producers. This initiative aims to boost rural jobs and stimulate the local economy by promoting the consumption of locally produced goods.

In conclusion, **I am dedicated to preserving our rural ways of life and providing robust support for our farmers.**

I will address the specific challenges faced by rural communities and promote their long-term sustainability and growth.

Together, we can ensure that our rural areas remain vibrant, resilient, and prosperous for generations to come. **Vote Conservative. Vote Matty. Vote for rural communities.**

Thank you.