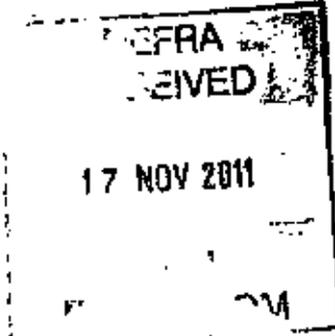


ME



**From:** TRUSS, Elizabeth [mailto:elizabeth.truss.mp@parliament.uk]  
**Sent:** 16 November 2011 11:44  
**To:** PS/Richard Benyon (Secretariat)  
**Subject:** FW: FWAG



**Elizabeth Truss MP**  
*Member of Parliament for South West Norfolk*  
The Limes  
32 Bridge Street, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3AG  
01842 757345

Dear Richard,

Please find below an email from my constituent, [REDACTED], together with the original attachment. He is concerned that the collapse of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) will impact on farmers and landowners, because of its valuable role in advising on regulations.

I would be grateful if you could advise on any way the Government could help so that I may provide him with a full reply.

Best wishes,

Elizabeth

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 09 November 2011 15:14  
**To:** TRUSS, Elizabeth; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FWAG

The country, let alone Europe and the world, is in meltdown.

I have ticked my 'E' box religiously for the last 4 years as I have feared the worst over the euro.

We as Landowners and Farmers are smothered with complex paperwork, in order to comply with this and that and to get entitlement to environmental funding.

FWAG has been an excellent 'Facilitator' to guide us through the unknown.

How can we have such a sham at such a critical time?

- HLS
- CAP review

- following on from the 're-mapping scenario' based on blotting paper and a felt tip pen, having had to abandon the OS Maps, the B<sup>h</sup> editions of the RPA maps (99% aground) and finally agree to the satellite map as required by the EC whose Accounts have never been signed off.

My apologies I am deviating, BUT the established backbone of the UK whose ancestors fought for peace and tranquillity are now being hung out to dry, and I fear left to starve.

China, where my great grandfather was the first British naval officer to fly the Union Flag after the taking of the Taku Forts in 1860, are busy building the infrastructure in Africa (20,000,000 are Chinese employed), and they are buying up land in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe + + to grow rice – hence the starving African.

My plea is how can we save FWAG? It may necessitate an input from us landowners, but we cannot let it go into administration – personally, I think that the Government has a responsibility, but 'immigration' questions their capability to handle anything.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

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LOOK OUT FOR

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CAP reforms delay until 2015 p16

Campaign struggling to meet target p17

## Farmers call for action over red tape review

By Johann Tasker

Farmers who meet higher environmental and animal welfare standards could be allowed to operate more freely, the government has confirmed.

Unveiling his interim response to the *MacDonald* report on agricultural red tape, farm minister Jim Paice said he intended to reduce the regulatory burden on farmers where doing so did not undermine environmental, health and animal welfare standards.

"Where we can, we're looking to free up those playing by the rules so they can get on with doing what they do best - running their farms. The *MacDonald* report was big, bold and ambitious, and if industry is ready to play its part, we can make it a reality."

New approaches being explored include making inspections more risk-based and targeted at farms at greater risk of breaching regulations. Inspections would also be co-ordinated to reduce the number of duplicate visits.

Simplifying complex environmental requirements would give clearer guidance to farmers about what practical measures they should take, said Mr Paice. Infor-

mation would be shared between agencies to make paperwork easier to complete.

"If we want a successful and competitive farming industry then the rules and regulations need to be drawn up with farmers in mind. Most farmers want to do the right thing and push standards even higher - what we need to do is help them do that in as simple and effective way as possible."

Richard MacDonald, who led the

### Many of our recommendations were bold and challenging

Richard MacDonald

red tape taskforce, said was encouraged by the comments. But he cautioned against over expectation. "Many of our recommendations were bold and challenging and for some there are no quick fixes."

But farm leaders warned that farmers and growers wanted to see action sooner rather than later. NFU deputy president Meurig Raymond said: "We really do need to start seeing actions that match the rhetoric. Delivery is the key."

The interim report was a step in the right direction, said Mr Raymond. "What we need now is some flesh on the bones. We need a clear timetable for how the aspirations in this report will be turned into reality with specific actions."

Conservation groups still have concerns about potential risks, however. Farmers who belonged to private farm assurance schemes with weak environmental components should not be exempt from official inspections, said the RSPB.

RSPB head of agriculture policy Gareth Morgan said many environmental regulations were vital and cost-effective. "This report makes it clear that where the environment is concerned, the vast majority of this legislation is critical and non-negotiable."

The RSPB understood the frustration of dealing with unnecessary bureaucracy, said Mr Morgan. But this must be distinguished from essential legislation which would ensure future generations had a healthy and productive countryside rich in wildlife.

The government's full and final response to the task force report will be published in early 2012.

Richard MacDonald encouraged but cautious about DEFRA's response.

## Local FWAG groups hope to go it alone

A cash crisis at the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) has prompted some local staff to explore the possibility of setting up as independent conservationists.

Bosses at the national body spent much of this week locked in emergency talks in a last-minute bid to secure a future for the organisation.

FWAG has sustained heavy losses over the past year, leaving some staff unpaid for the past month.

FWAG was expected to call

in the administrators as *Farmers Weekly* went to press.

Projects would be completed and customer requirements met where possible, said a letter to members from FWAG chairman Henry Lucas.

Local FWAG groups in Cumbria, Suffolk and south-west England are now exploring the viability of establishing independent advisory groups in the event that the national body cannot be rescued.

The NFU is also following events closely.

"It would be wrong to raise people's hopes because we are not looking to rescue FWAG, but we are looking to see if any of its services can be salvaged," said NFU policy director Martin Hawthorn.

The charity has found it difficult to keep its head above water since its core funding was withdrawn following the government's comprehensive spending review last autumn.

It has also suffered from a downturn in stewardship applications.

A recent legal judgment added further financial woe. The courts ruled that FWAG's historic assets could no longer be used to secure lending, which led to the banks withdrawing the charity's credit facility last month.

FWAG is an independent body providing environmental and conservation advice to farmers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It was established in 1969 by a group of farmers who were concerned about the loss of habitat and wildlife.

johann.tasker@rbi.co.uk

