

Written evidence submitted by the Sport and Recreation Alliance

1. The Sport and Recreation Alliance provides advice, support and guidance to our members who represent the outdoor recreation sector, traditional governing bodies of games and sport, county sports partnerships, water pursuits, and movement and dance exercise. As the voice of the sector, we work with Government, policy makers and the media to make sure grassroots sport and recreation grows and thrives.
2. The Alliance welcomes the publication of Government's consultation 'The future for food, farming and the environment' and the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the Environmental Audit Committee and the have launched inquiries which are similar in nature and both ask about Government's future agricultural policy once the UK leaves the European Union (EU). The Alliance has therefore submitted a similar response to both inquiries, as there are several areas which overlap.
3. The natural environment plays a vital role both for our physical and mental health, with evidence suggesting that health and exercise is one of the most frequently cited motivations for visiting the outdoors.¹ Outdoor recreation also provides a significant economic contribution to our national economy, with around a quarter of visits to the outdoors resulting in an estimated spend of £17 billion between March 2013 and February 2014.² As part of considerations for future agricultural policy, we hope the Committee will recognise the role of the natural environment and the countryside as vital tools for getting people active.
4. Government has indicated that agricultural policy will be reformed once the UK withdraws from the European Union (EU). We welcome the proposal of a new land management system, which will be underpinned by payment of public money for the provision of public goods. The Alliance's own *Reconomics Plus* report demonstrates there is strong evidence that being active outdoors contributes significantly to individuals' physical and mental health and provides a wide range of social and economic benefits.³
5. In this context, the natural environment provides important opportunities for everyone to be active and in so doing generates an important public good. Government has stated an ambition to work with land managers to consider the role of a new scheme which encourages broad participation and secures environmental improvements. Environmental stewardship is an integral part of land management, but equally is the accessibility of this land for the greater public good. In our view, Government should award funds to land managers who promote the provision of green spaces which provide opportunities for people to be active.
6. We welcome the public good policy proposal, but Government is yet to detail how the funding will be structured and explain arrangements for funding beyond 2022. We therefore encourage the Committee to scrutinise Government proposals for this new funding

¹*Monitor of the Natural Environment: The natural survey on people and the natural environment*, Natural England, May 2017

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614353/mene-headline-report-2015-16.pdf

² *Reconomics Plus: The Economic, Health and Social Value of Outdoor Recreation*, February 2017, <https://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/699fec08-3f90-4e00-ac4a-c074b353a38d.pdf>

³ *ibid.*

approach and in particular, seek further assurance as to how it will incentivise investment in the natural environment and ensure as many people as possible can be active outdoors.

7. In conclusion, we welcome Government's consultation and plans for reforming agricultural and environmental policies. Leaving the Common Agricultural Policy presents a significant opportunity to reform existing policies and ultimately enhance our natural environment. We support the proposed public good model but it is vital it reflects the benefits of being active outdoors and incentivises investment in the provision and management of accessible green space for this purpose.