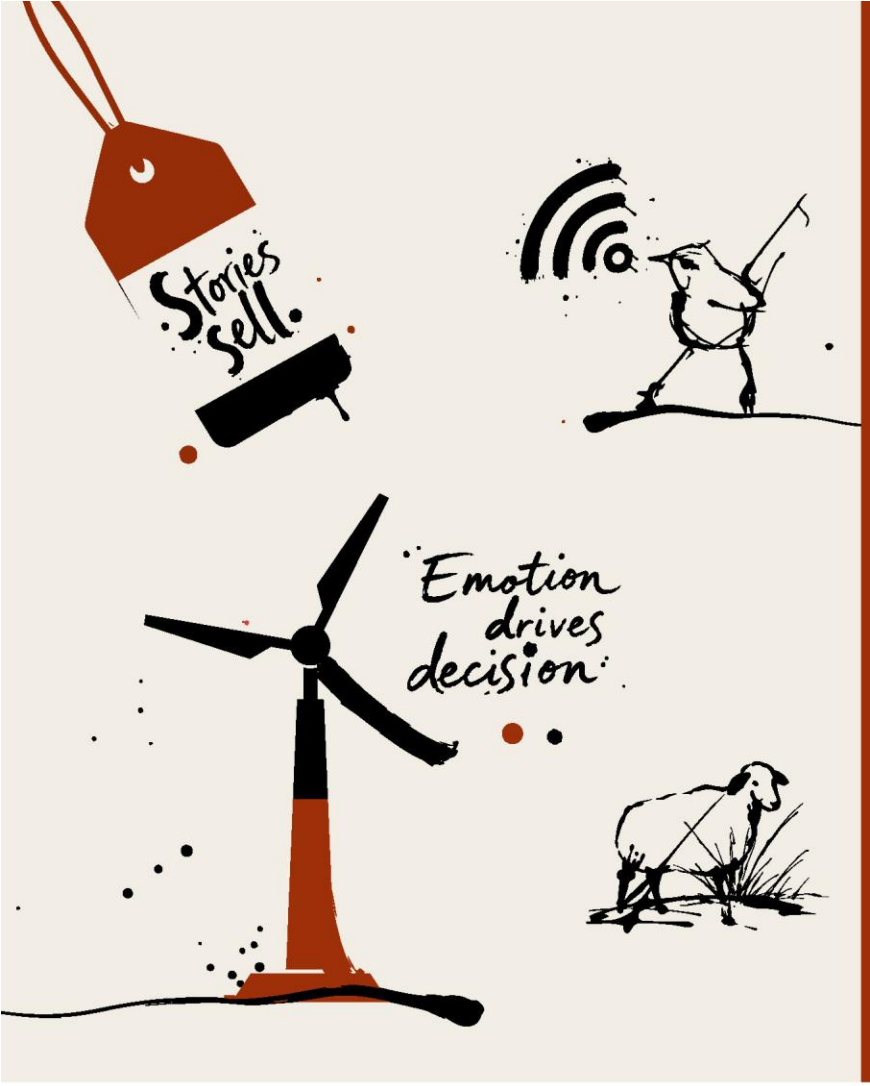


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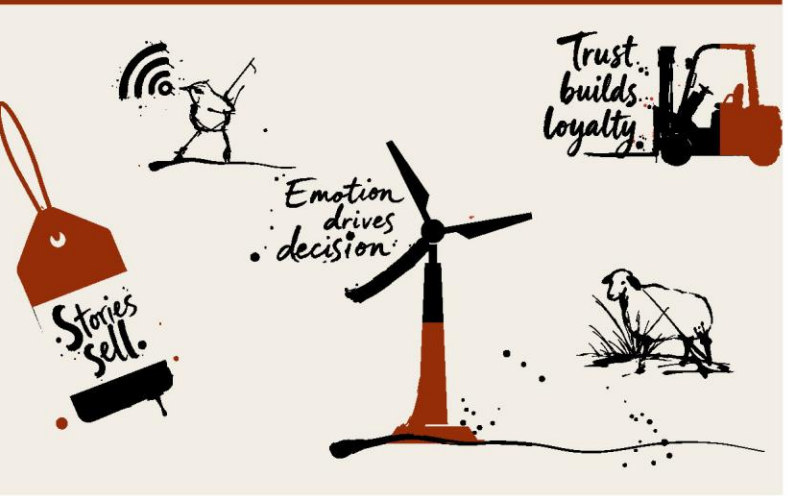
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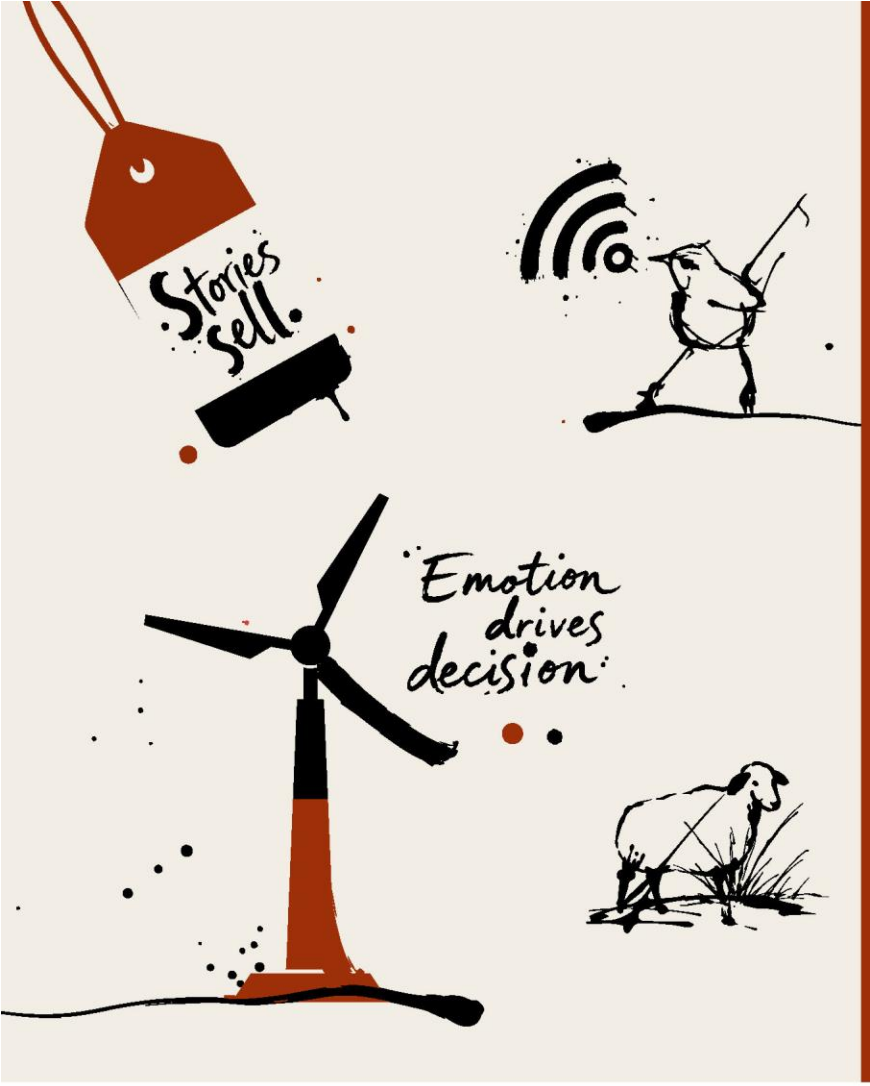
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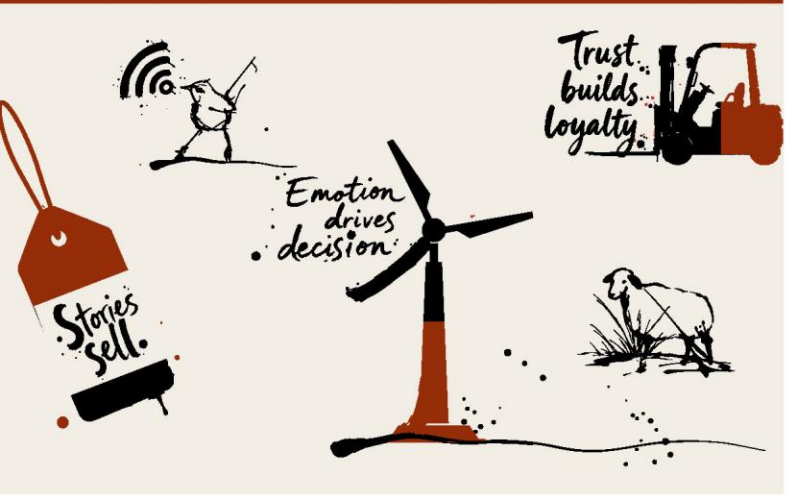
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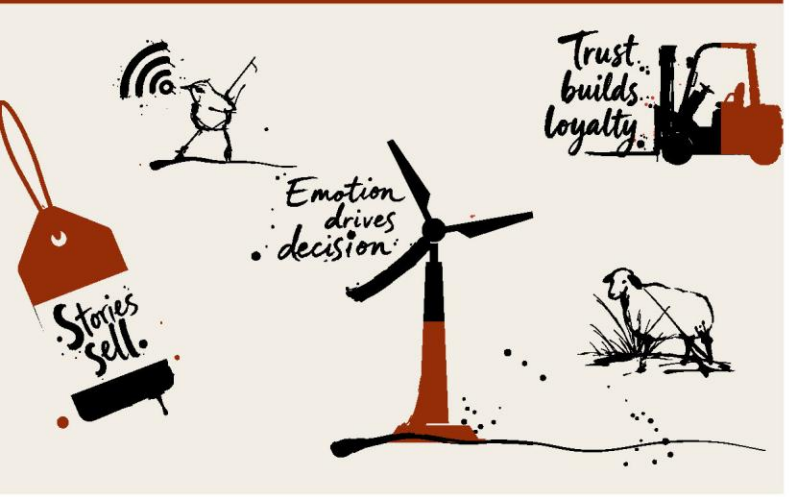
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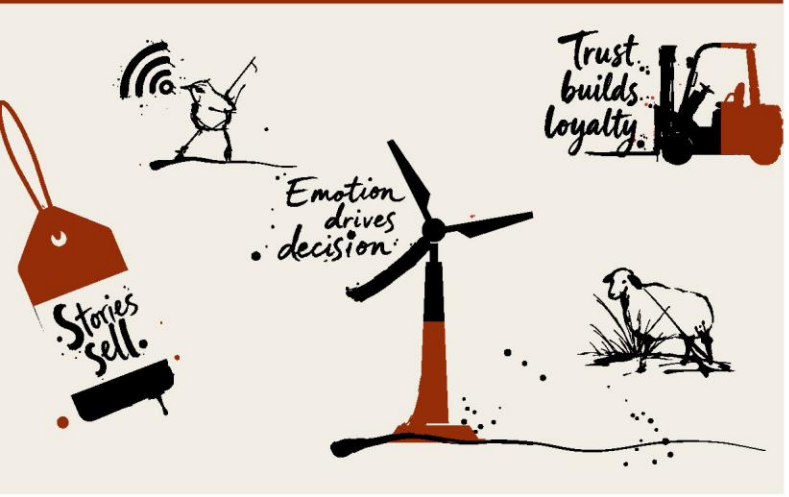
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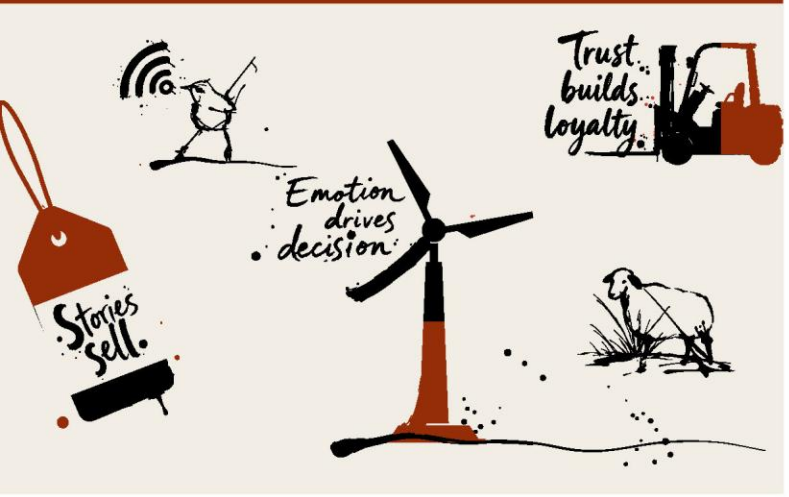
Rt Hon Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP
Secretary of State for
Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs

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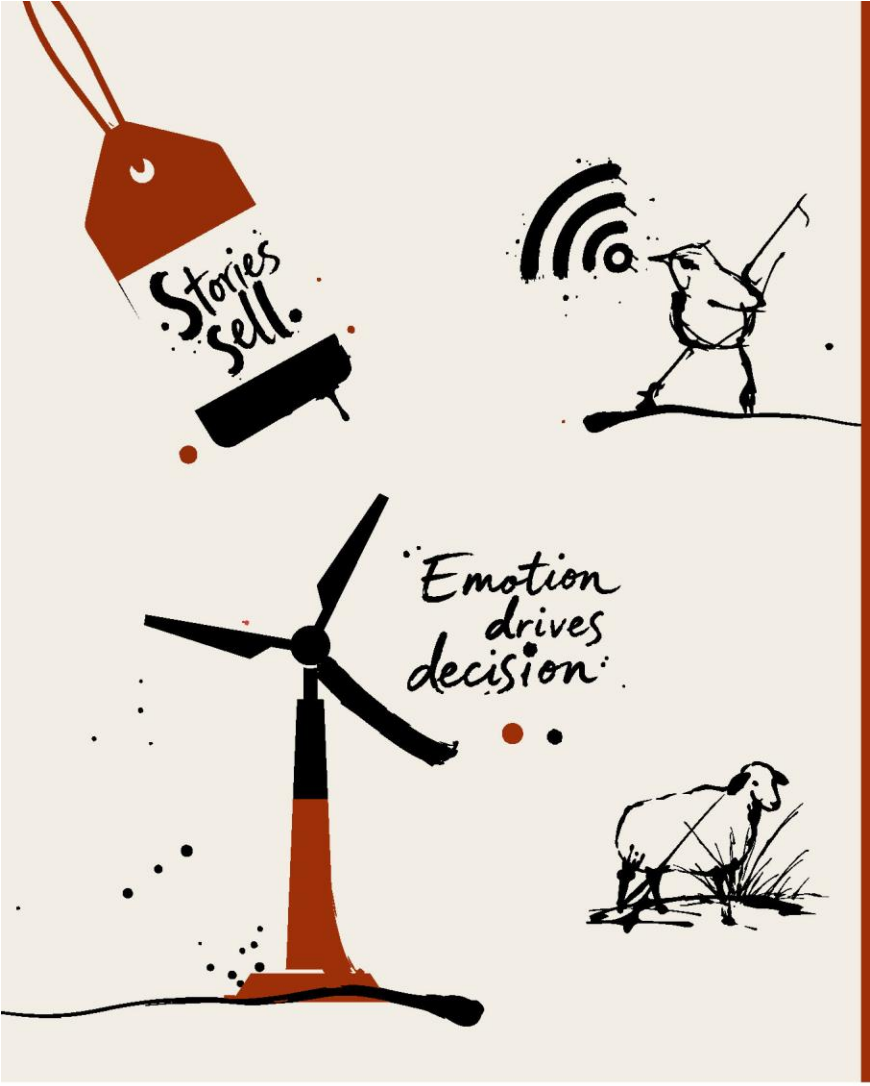
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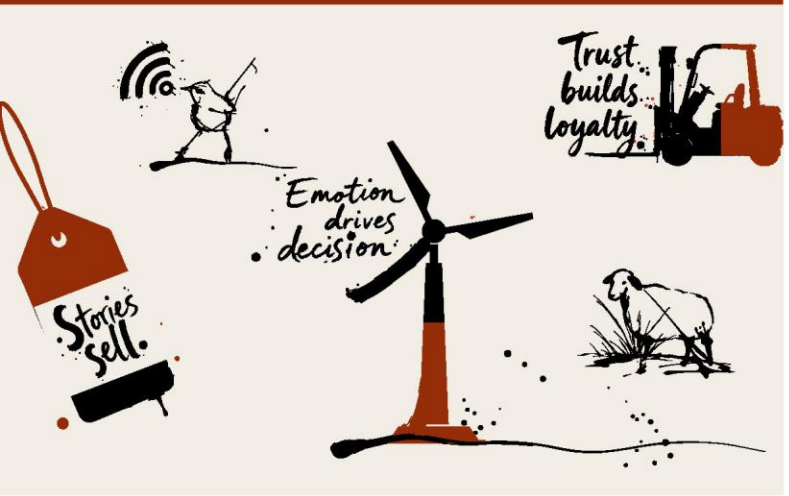
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Alex Newton
Deputy Director
More in Common UK

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Beautiful, but overlooked?

What Britons think of the countryside and the rural economy

CLA Conference, 19 November 2026

Introducing the Seven Segments

The British **Seven Segments** were developed to move beyond traditional left-right or party-based analysis by exploring the deeper psychological, cultural and value-driven foundations that shape public opinion.

This approach helps explain why political loyalties have fractured and offers a more nuanced understanding of what drives attitudes on issues like immigration, climate and the economy – enabling more effective engagement with the public across a fragmented political and social landscape.



Britons' starting points on the countryside

‘Beautiful’ is the word Britons most associate with the countryside

In a word or two, how would you describe the UK today?



In a word or two, what comes to mind when you think of the British countryside?



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Fieldwork dates: 31 October - 1 November 2026

The public’s view of the countryside is overwhelmingly positive, with **‘beautiful’** being by far the word that comes to mind most often when thinking of it.

This is in stark contrast to how people think of the UK as a whole, which is almost entirely negative.

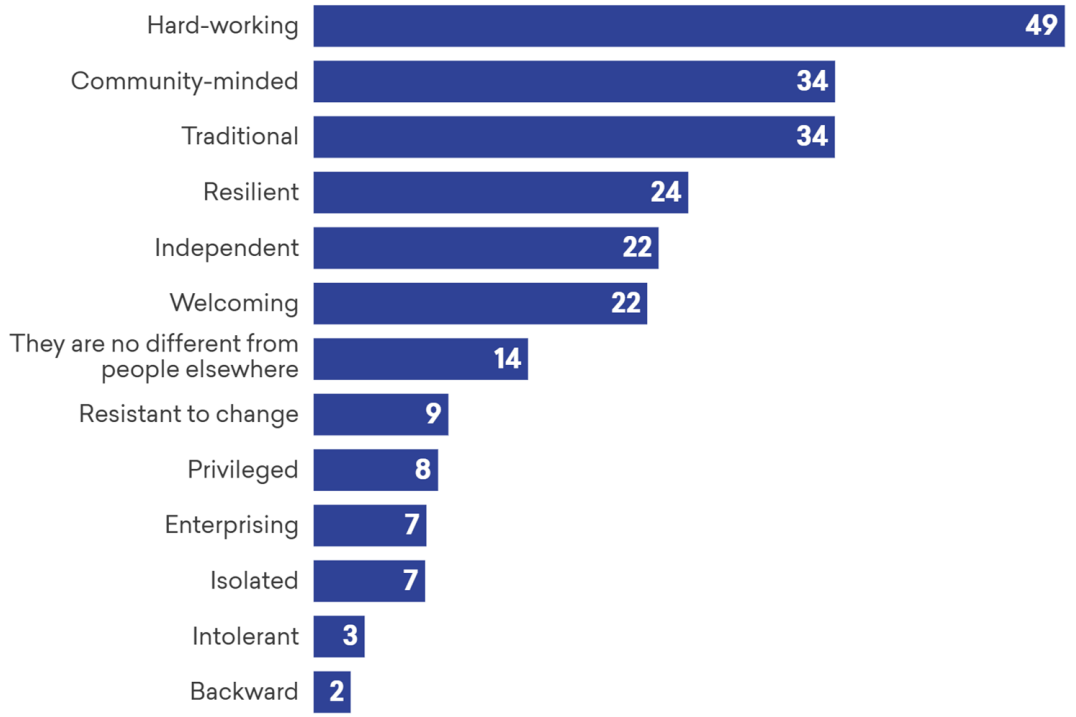
And most Britons, wherever they are based, use positive adjectives to describe rural dwellers

The public generally views those living in the countryside very positively, with just under half describing them as **'hard-working'** with other popular choices being **'community-minded'**, **'traditional'** and **'resilient'**. Very few would describe them as either intolerant (3 per cent) or backward (2 per cent).

There is some variation based on where people live, but it remains positive in outlook. Urban Britons are marginally more likely to think rural Britons are welcoming (26 per cent) and enterprising (11 per cent). They are also slightly less likely to think rural Britons are no different from everyone else (8 per cent). Generally though, both those in cities and those across the UK view rural folk rather positively.

Perceptions of those in the countryside are very positive

Which three of the following, if any, best fit your impression of people who live in the countryside?



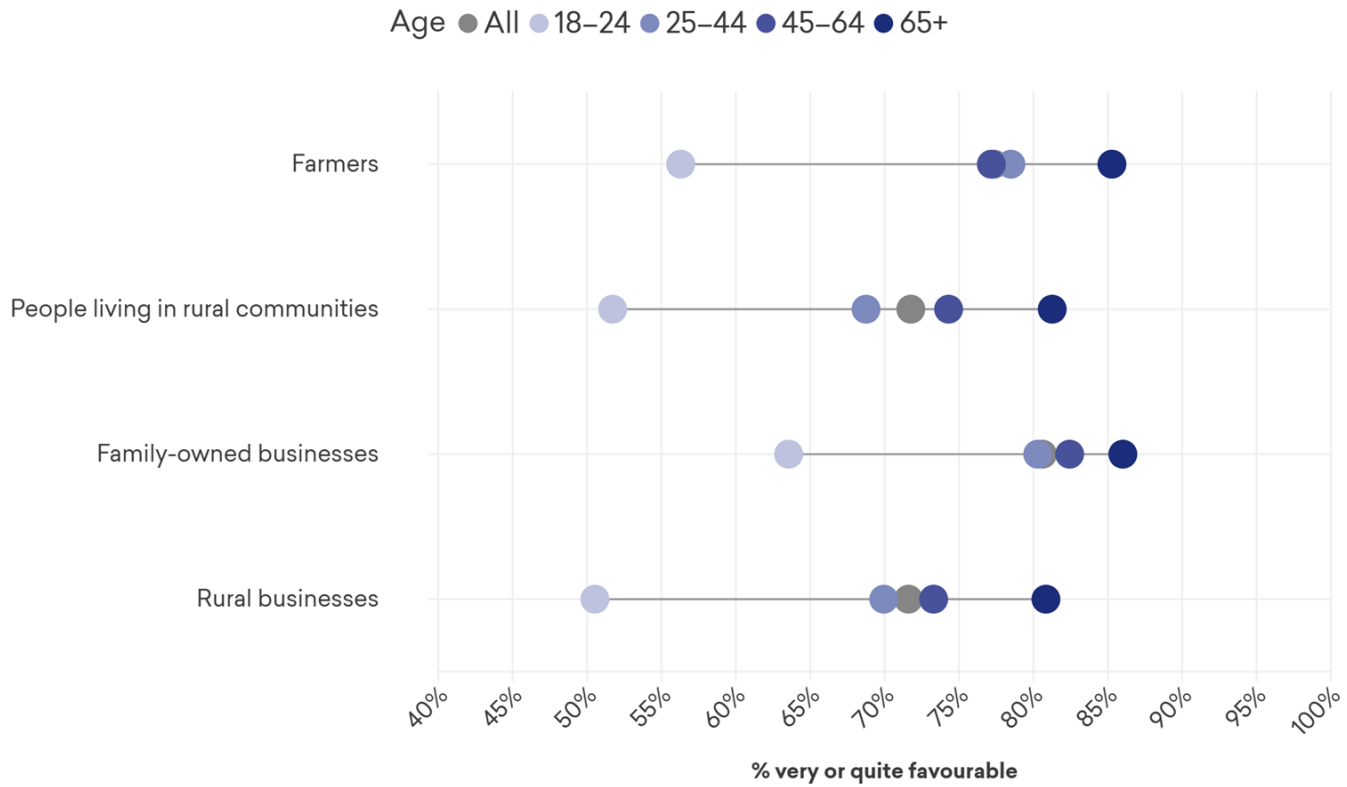
Most Britons think positively of farmers, though the youngest are outliers

Similarly, views of farmers, rural communities and both family-owned and rural businesses are **very positive**. Nearly 40 per cent have a very favourable view of farmers and family-owned businesses, with roughly 80 per cent viewing them at least somewhat favourably.

However, there is some variation by age, with those between the ages of 18 and 24 being less likely to view all of the listed groups favourably. Despite this large gap though, young Britons still hold a largely favourable view of all groups, with unfavourable rating sitting between 9 and 12 per cent.

Younger Britons have a less favourable view of rural people and businesses

How favourable or unfavourable is your view of each of the following?



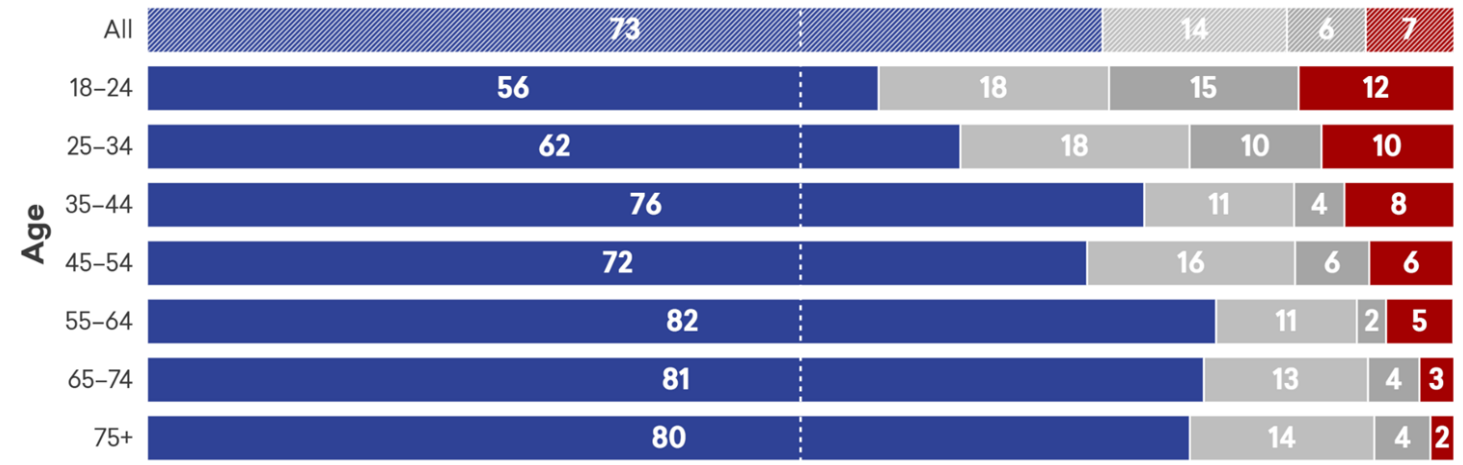
Across divides, there is consensus that urban visitors should adapt to rural communities rather than vice versa

The public overwhelmingly feels that **urban visitors to the countryside should adapt their behaviour** to meet the expectations of those living there. In line with the public's views on rural communities, there is much respect for the people who make their livings and go about life in the countryside.

There is variation by age, but even a majority of the youngest agree that urban Britons should adapt to rural expectations. Younger groups are more likely to feel neither should adapt, but this is a point where the public finds a great deal of consensus.

Britons are largely agreed that urban visitors should adapt to rural expectations

Thinking about when people visit the countryside, which comes closest to your view?



Understanding the countryside

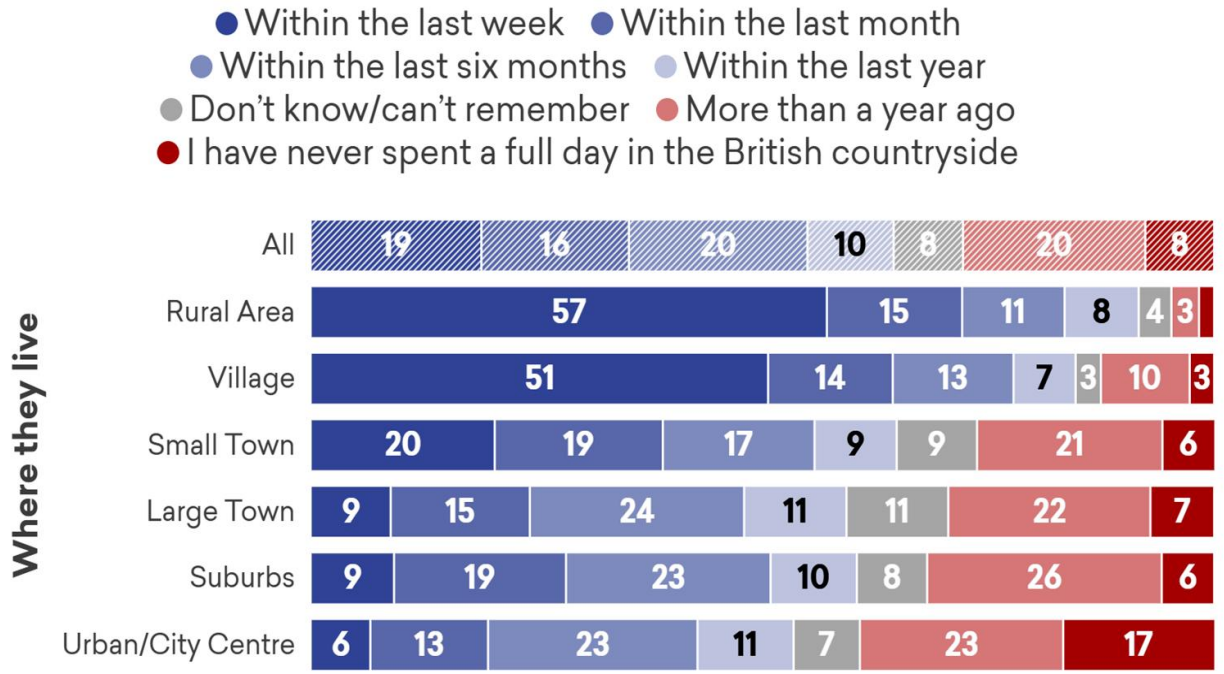
Two in five urban dwellers have not visited the countryside this year

17 per cent of those living in cities and urban areas say that they have **never spent a full day in the countryside in their lives**. Beyond this, those living in urban or suburban areas are much less likely to spend time in the countryside than rural Britons, with the difference being quite stark.

This goes to show that while people view the countryside positively, regardless of where they live, the reality is many in cities have little to no experience of the countryside.

A quarter of Britons haven't spent a day in the countryside in over a year

When was the last time you spent a full day in the British countryside?



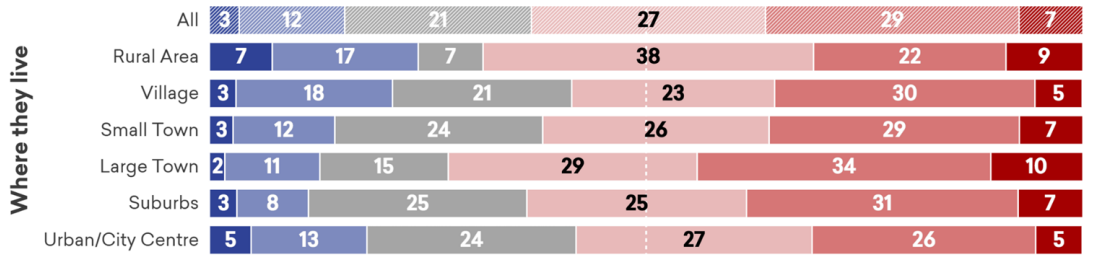
Knowledge of how the countryside works is patchy

Most of the public, even those who live in rural areas, significantly underestimate the amount of land in the UK that is used for agriculture. In fact, a plurality of Britons feel the answer is between 10-29 per cent, less than half of the reality (69 per cent).

On other metrics of rural life, the public has a reasonable grasp on things. 9 in ten Britons know potatoes grow underground, although only 37 per cent are aware that cows need to be milked several times a day, with this falling to 22 per cent for under 25s. However, **the severe underestimation of how much land is used for agriculture suggests a lack of understanding of the rural economy**.

Even rural Britons underestimate how much UK land is used for agriculture

Roughly what proportion of land in the UK do you think is used for agriculture?

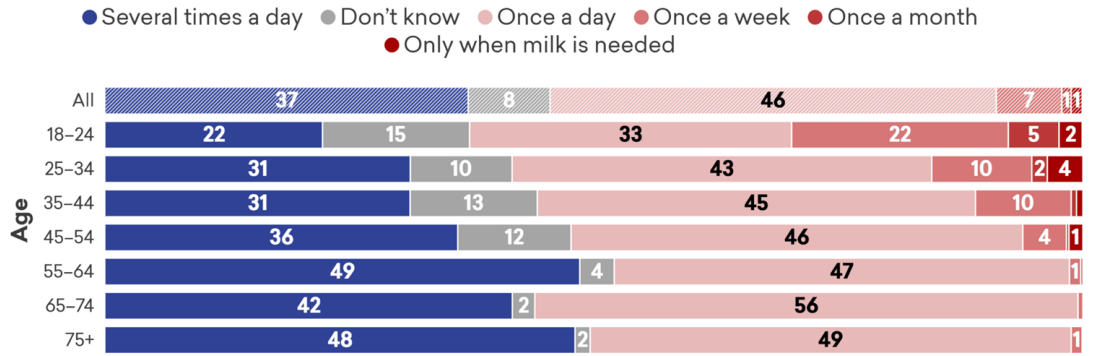


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Younger Britons are the least informed on milking cows

How often do you think cows need to be milked?



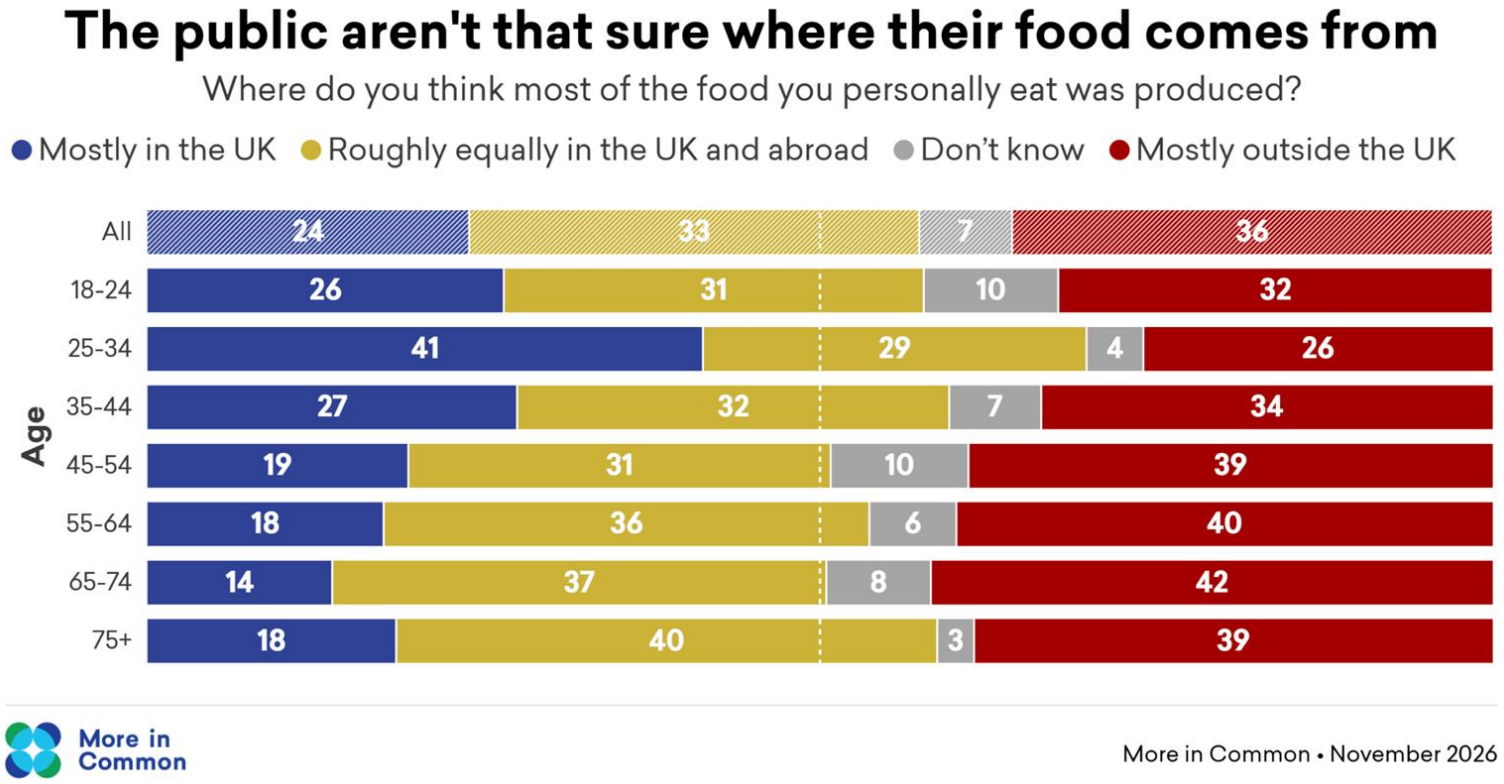
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Most Britons don’t know that most of their food is produced in the UK

Only one in four Britons think that most of the UK’s food is produced in the UK; in fact, 60 per cent is produced domestically. Two in three either think that the food is equally locally produced, and imported, or mostly imported. Young people’s knowledge is slightly better here than older Britons.

This speaks to the earlier point, where **despite the public’s affection for the countryside, they don’t understand the scale of the rural economy**. More than that, most Britons are unaware that most of their food is produced in the UK, despite wanting food to be produced in the UK.



Britons are divided on many issues, but agree on seeing the countryside as a place of nature not business

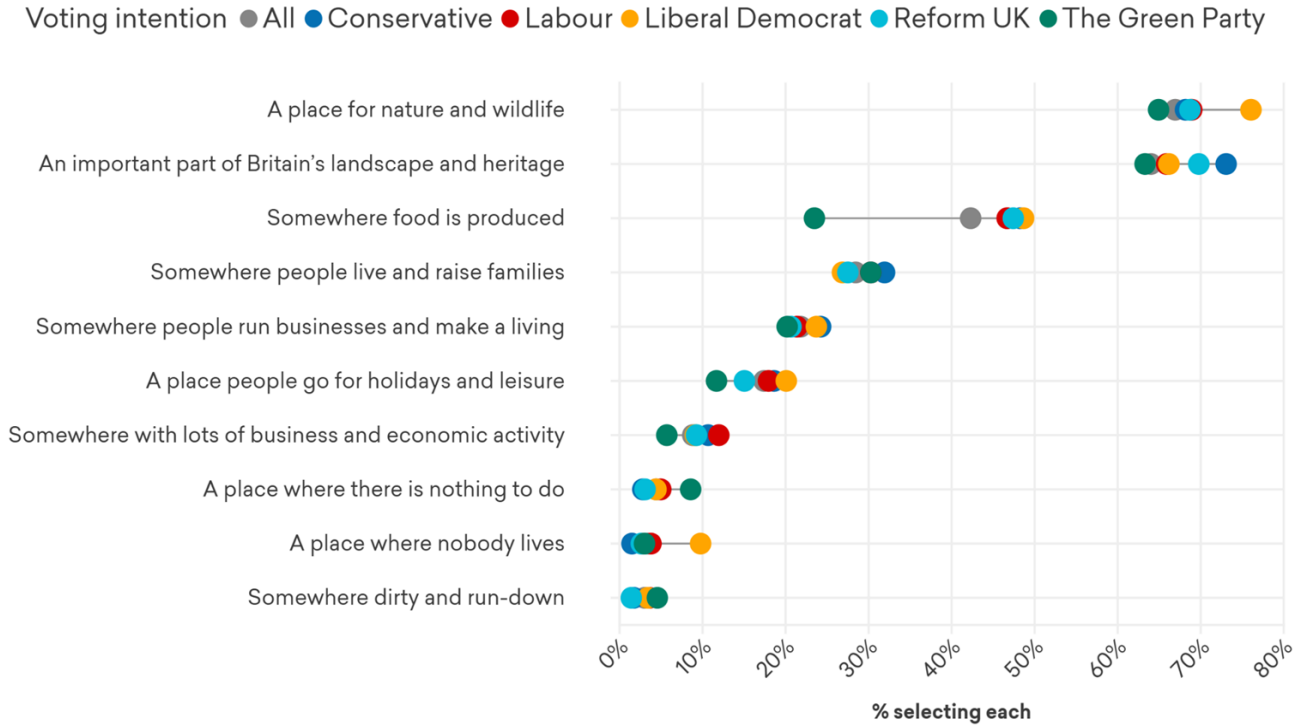
Two thirds of Britons think of the countryside as a place for nature and wildlife, with just under two thirds seeing it as part of Britain's landscape and heritage.

Only 9 per cent see it as a place with lots of business and economic activity. Even those living in rural areas, those who feel they understand the countryside and have connections to it, express this same perception.

This perception holds true for Britons regardless of the party they support.

Britons largely agree on what the countryside is

Which of the following comes closest to what you think of the British countryside as? (select up to three)



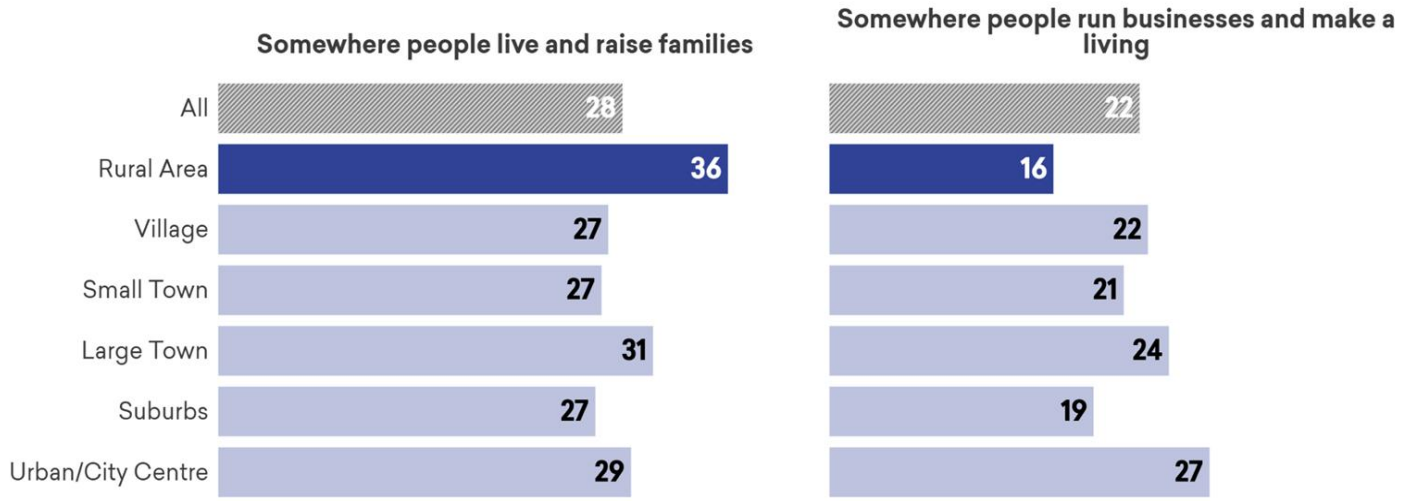
Rural Britons are as likely, if not more so, not to see the countryside through an economic lens

More generally the public doesn't tend to see the countryside as an area of great economic activity, but contrary to perceptions, this view is not concentrated in the cities.

Those in rural areas are the most likely to see the countryside as somewhere people raise families and are simultaneously the least likely to see it as somewhere people run businesses. So, a part of the urban rural divide at play, isn't just urban misunderstandings of the countryside, but is also **the rural community's difficulties in recognising its own economic potential**.

Rural Britons are less likely to see the countryside in an economic context than those outside of it

Which of the following comes closest to what you think of the British countryside as? (select up to three)



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The rural economy

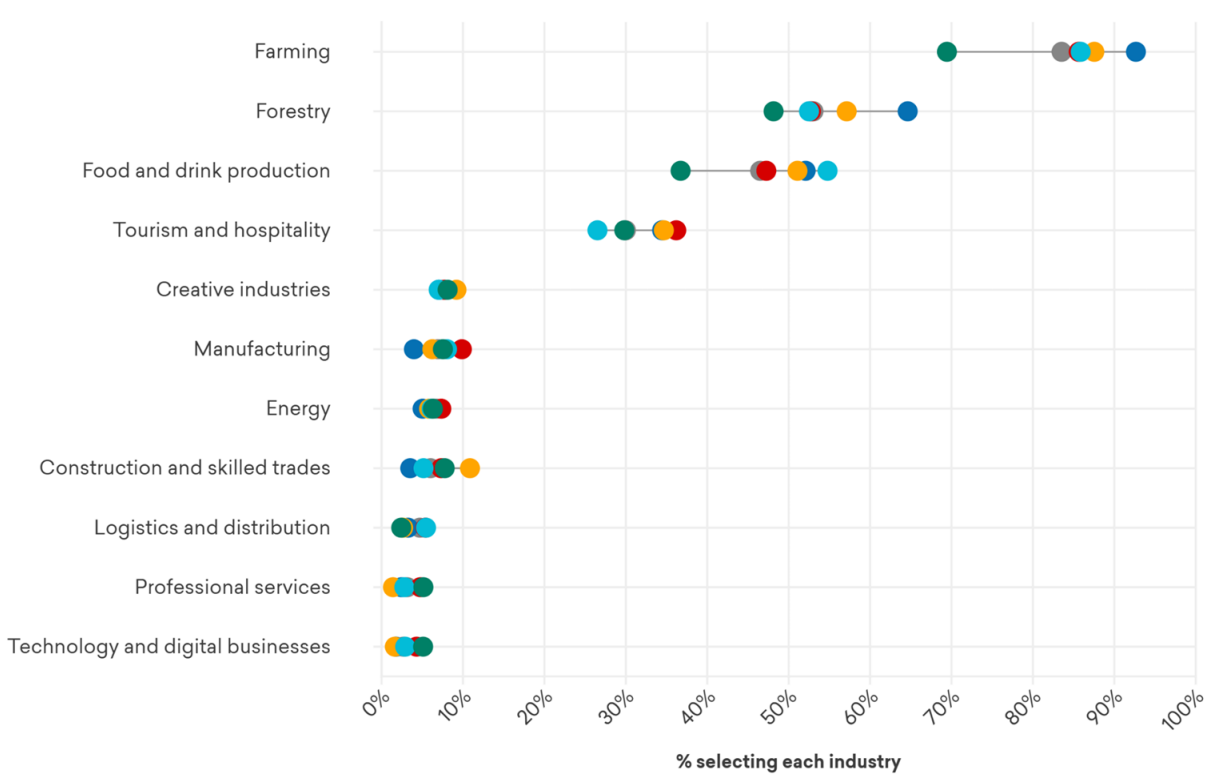
The rural economy is seen almost entirely as farming

When it comes to industries the public associates with the rural economy, farming (84 per cent) wins by a country mile. Forestry (53 per cent) is the second most chosen option, with more than half of the public associating it with the rural economy, with food and drink production (47 per cent) in third place.

This is visible across supporters of different parties, with there being much more consensus than disagreement. Green voters again stand out, being less likely to associate the rural economy with industries like farming, forestry and food production, again in line with the relative youth of that group. But, **in an increasingly divided Britain we see more evidence that that public is not divided on how it sees the countryside**.

Different party supporters tend to see the rural economy the same way

Which of the following industries do you associate with the rural economy? Select up to three.



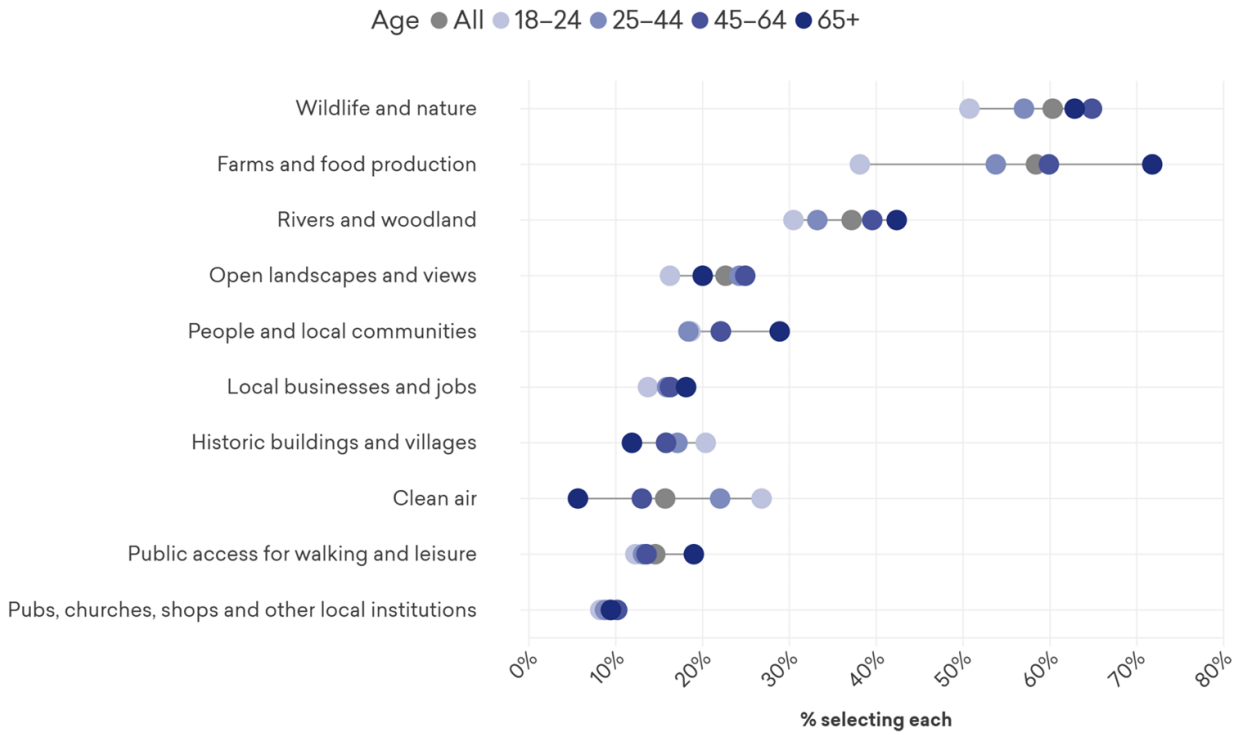
Britons value the economic benefits of the countryside in terms of farms and food production

The public see the value in protecting the wildlife and nature in the countryside, as well as farms, rivers and woodland. But **when it comes to what people think needs to be protected, local businesses and jobs are quite low on that list** (16 per cent). When looked at by age we see older Britons are more concerned about farms, whereas younger Britons care more about air quality.

Pubs land at the bottom of the list, alongside churches, shops and local institutions (9 per cent). The concern is almost entirely concentrated on the natural environment of the countryside, with little regard for the rural economy and struggling businesses.

Older Britons are more likely to think farms need to be protected

What do you think is most worth protecting about the British countryside? Select up to three.



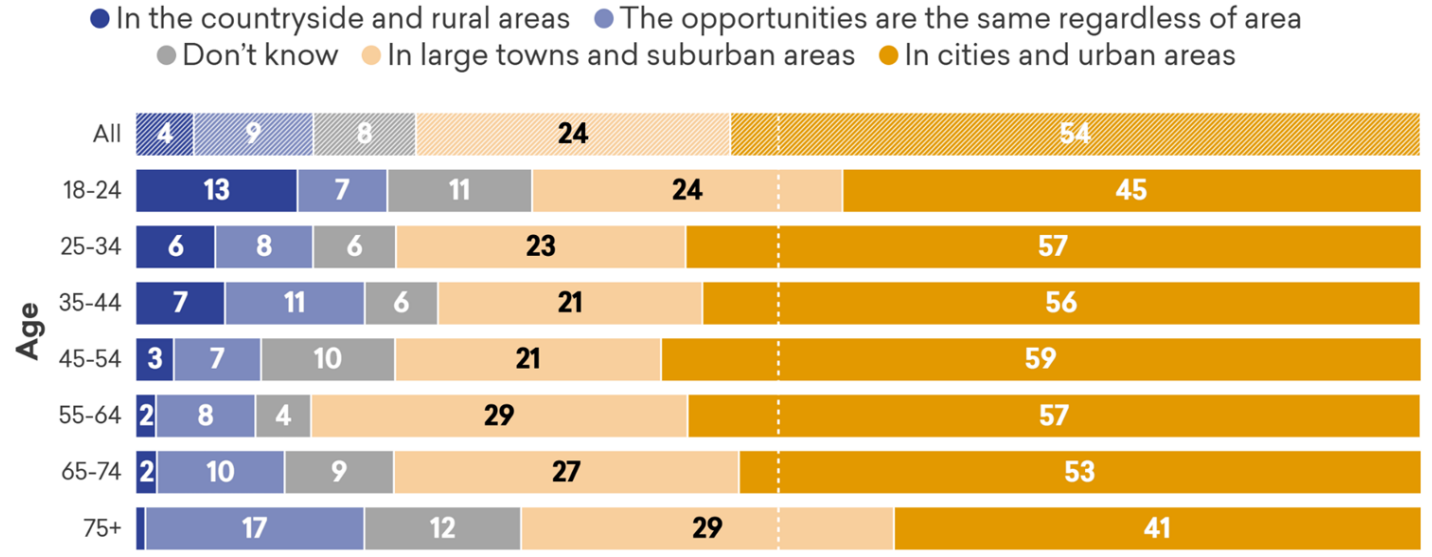
Most think urban areas have the best employment prospects for young people, though younger groups are more positive

There is little optimism about career opportunities for young people in rural areas, with the vast majority feeling that the best opportunities lie in either urban areas or large towns and suburban areas.

Interestingly, the most optimistic group about career opportunities in rural areas are those between the ages of 18 to 24. Nonetheless, **Britons of all ages see greater opportunities in urban areas than rural areas**. So even if the public don't understand the rural economy, they can perceive the lack of economic opportunities in rural areas.

Young people are the most positive about rural job prospects

Thinking about a young person starting their career, where do you think they would find the most employment opportunities?

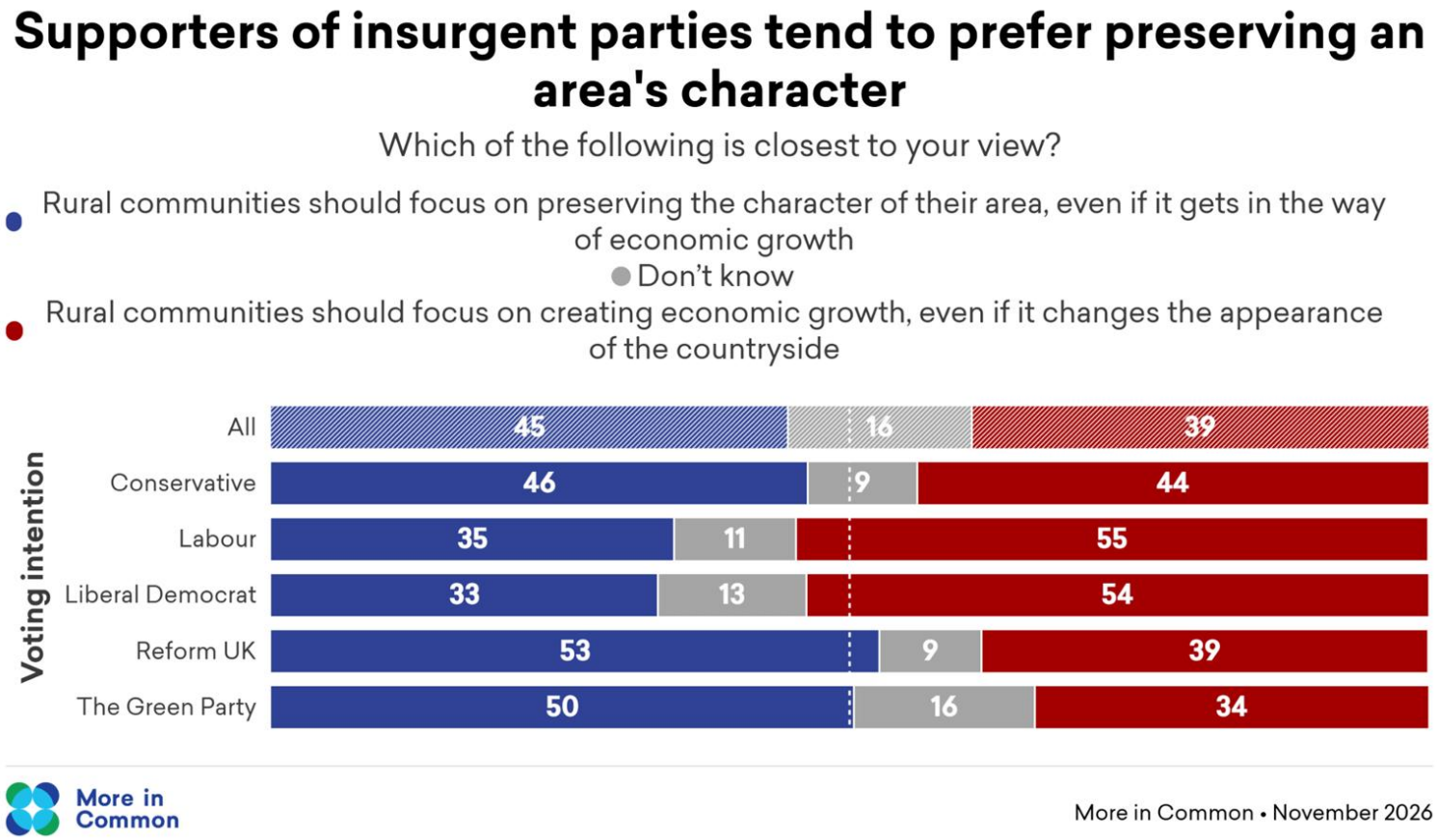


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Britons are split on economic growth in the countryside if it changes its character

45 per cent of Britons would choose **to preserve the character of a rural area at the cost of growth**, while 39 per cent would choose the opposite.

Supporters of different parties differ on how they see this though. Supporters of insurgent parties like Reform UK and the Green Party lean towards preservation of character, while Labour and Liberal Democrats lean towards economic growth. The Conservative supporters on the other hand are split on the issue, with no obvious leaning.



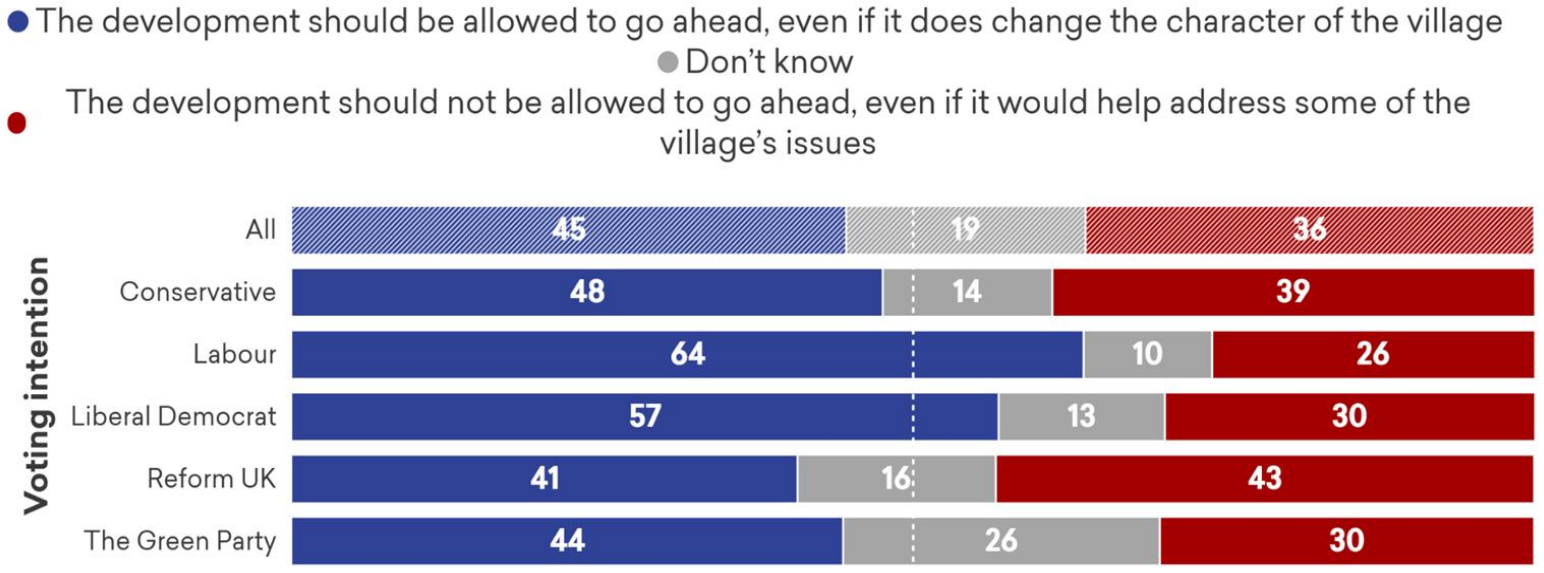
But, Britons do tend to prioritise growth and development if local businesses are threatened

When real stakes are put before the public, they are shown to be moveable. When a hypothetical scenario of a village losing their businesses and school is put forward, the public goes from slight opposition to development, to qualified support for it.

This type of scenario drives weakens opposition greatly from Green and Reform voters, while Labour and Liberal Democrats become even more in favour. Conservatives again though are mostly divided on the issue.

Practical arguments weaken resistance to development

A rural village is at risk of losing local businesses and its school because too few people live there year-round. A new proposal aims to build homes on nearby fields, including affordable housing for locals. However, some are concerned that the new development would change the character of the village, and ruin some of the views. Which comes closest to your view?



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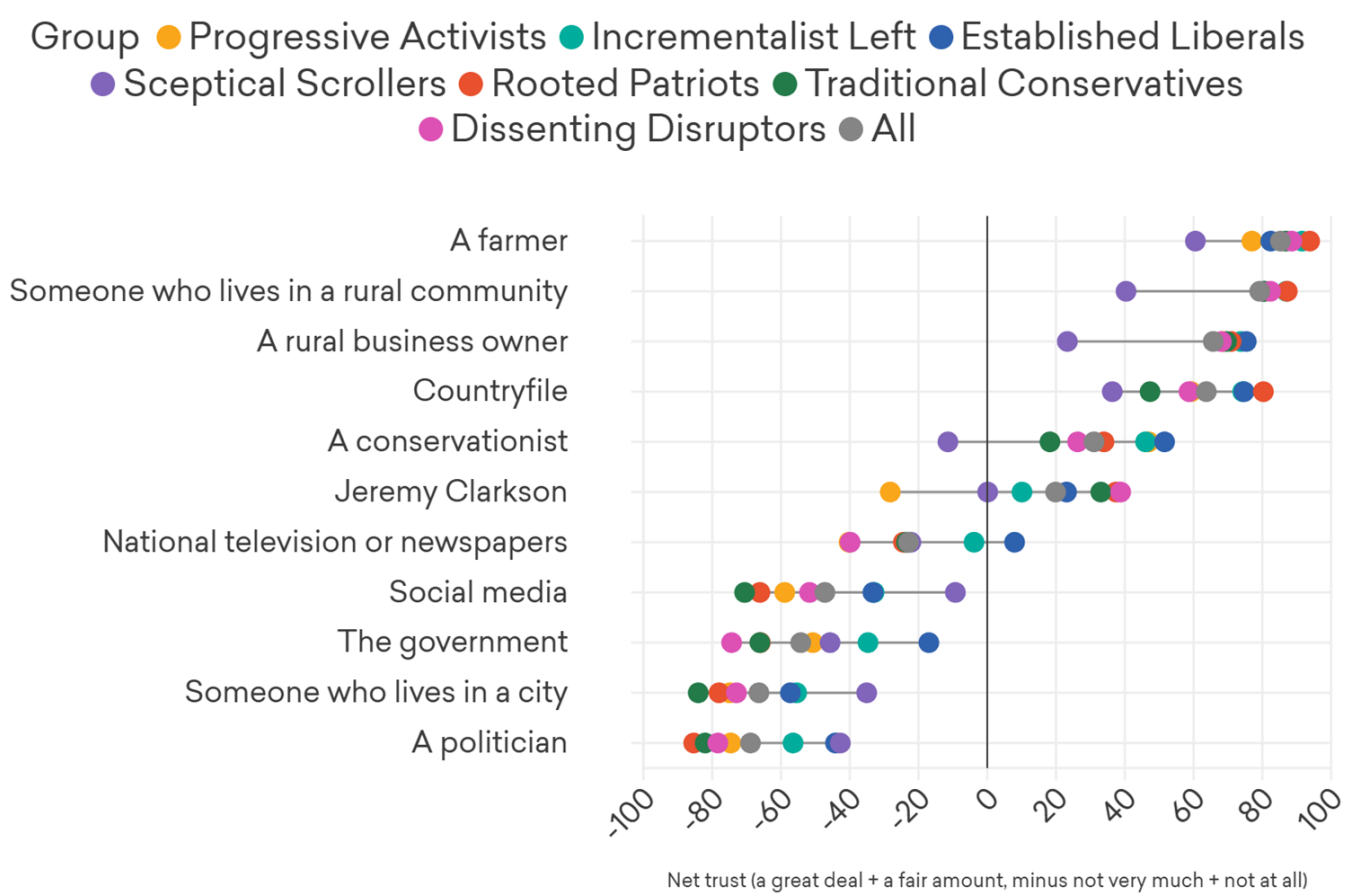
Talking about the countryside

Farmers are the most trusted voice on rural life, politicians the least

Farmers, alongside people who live in rural areas, are trusted the most to explain the realities of country life. Other trusted sources include rural business owners, conservationists, Countryfile and Jeremy Clarkson, though these are more divided among segments.

The least trusted figures are politicians, city dwellers, the government as well as both print and social media. Much of this speak to Briton's distrust of institutions and the media.

How much would you trust each of the following to explain what life in the British countryside is actually like?



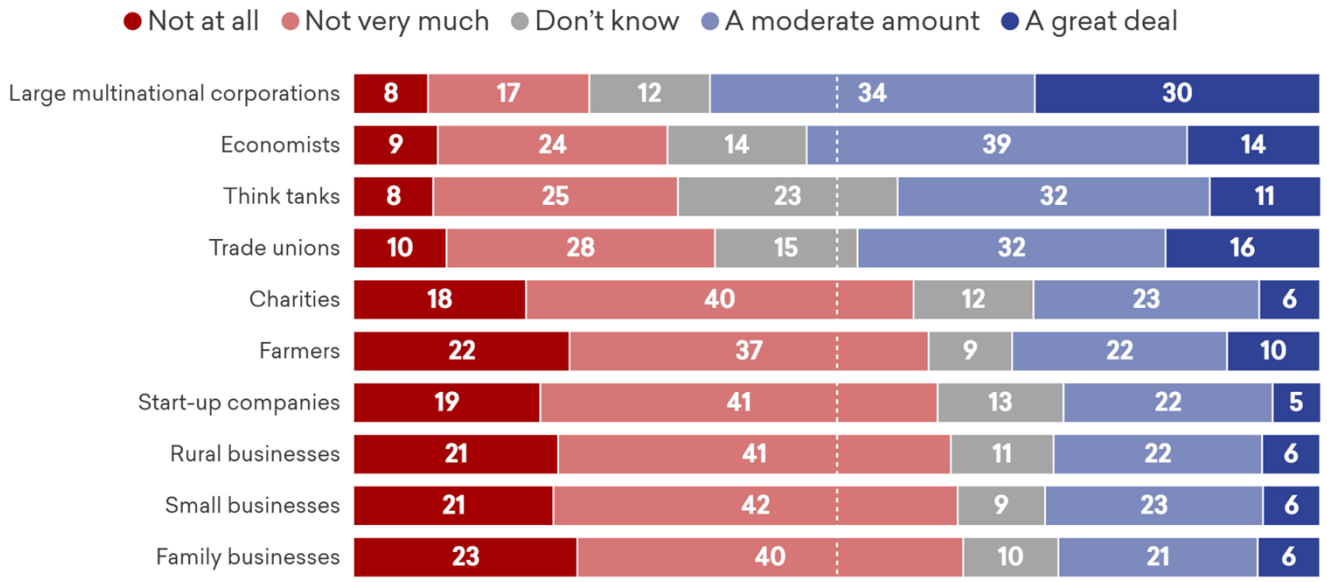
Most think government listens to multinationals; few think it listens to rural businesses or farmers

Generally speaking, the public doesn't tend to think that the government listens to many organisations when making economic decisions. The few that do think that multinational corporations, economists, think tanks and trade unions are most listened to.

The public thinks the government is the least likely to listen to family businesses, small businesses and rural businesses. In addition, the public also thinks government ignores start-ups, farmers and charities, painting a picture of a public who feel the government listens to those in power and in politics, but not ordinary businesspeople.

Britons think family businesses are ignored by government

To what extent do you feel the government takes into account the perspectives of the following, when making decisions on the economy?



Across age groups, most want Britain to focus on growing its own food even if that increases prices

The public overwhelmingly backs a focus on British produced food, even if it costs more. The only group that seems to differ on this point is those between the ages of 18 and 24, however even this group shows majority support for British produced food.

The levels of support for local produce amongst older sections of the population are noteworthy, with nearly 100 per cent of those over 75 backing the idea. This is a topic where the public finds consensus, but among older generations, there is practically no disagreement at all.

Older Britons almost unanimously want locally produced food, younger Britons are less sure

Which of the following comes closest to your view?



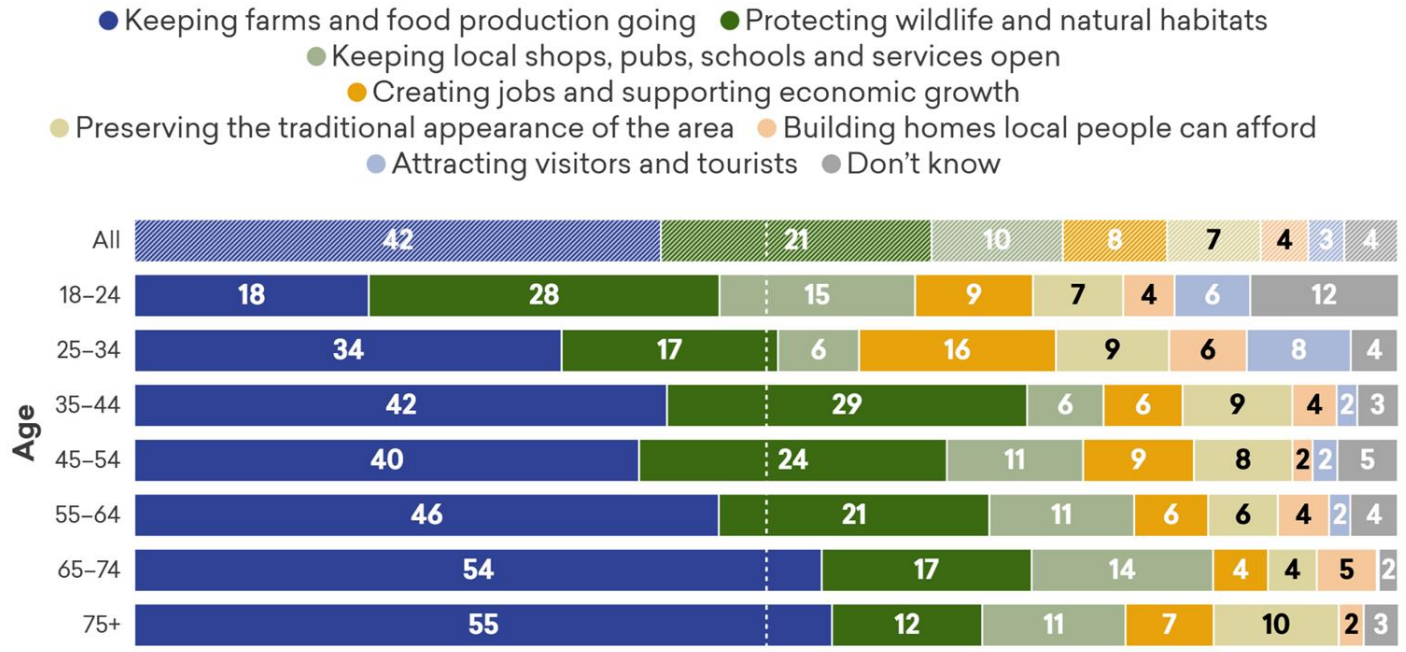
When forced to choose one priority, Britons tend to favour keeping farm and food production going

While the public struggles to see the countryside in terms of jobs and business, **it understands farming and food production is an industry under strain and in need of support**.

Overall, the public feels farming ought to be a priority for rural communities, with four in ten feeling this way. There is variation by age though, as the youngest Britons would prefer nature and wildlife be put before farming. The older the public gets though, the more it leans towards prioritising farming, with a majority of those over 65 choosing farming and food production as the priority for rural communities.

Young Britons choose nature, while older Britons choose farming and food production

Which of the following do you think rural communities should prioritise most?



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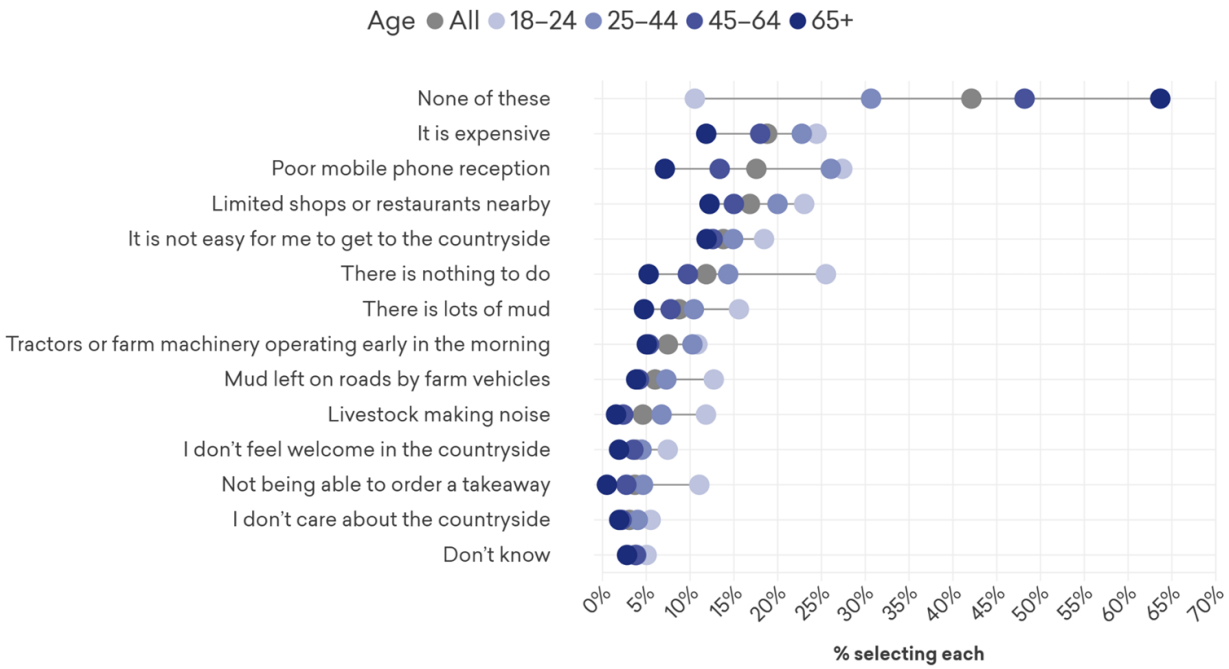
Nothing puts two in five Britons off visiting the countryside

One of the most direct ways in which Britons can support the rural economy is by going out and visiting it. This is something that the public sees little issue with, as the most selected barrier to visiting the countryside was 'none of these' at 42 per cent, suggesting that for most there is little stopping them from going and spending their money in the community.

However, young people are more likely to be put-off by all of the suggested reasons, especially the perception that there is nothing to do. But for the rural economy, **there are positive signs that there are no major barriers that are stopping most people from going out into the countryside**.

Young people are the most likely to be put-off a weekend in the countryside

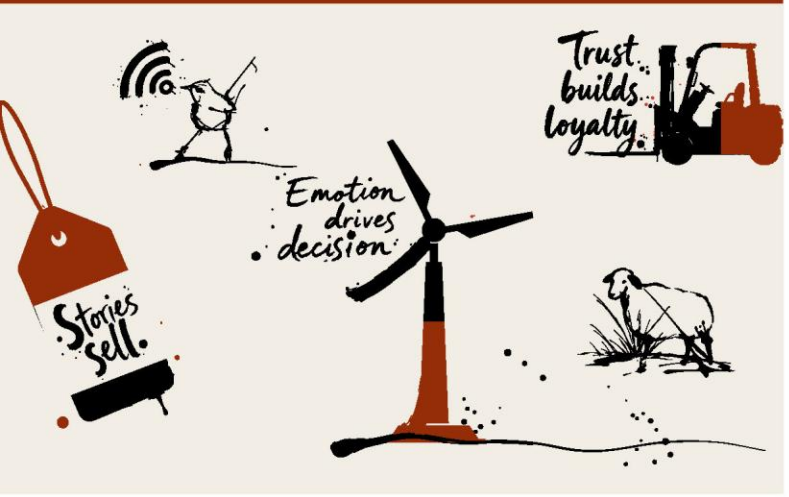
Which of the following, if any, would most put you off the idea of spending a weekend away in the countryside? Select up to three





Thank you

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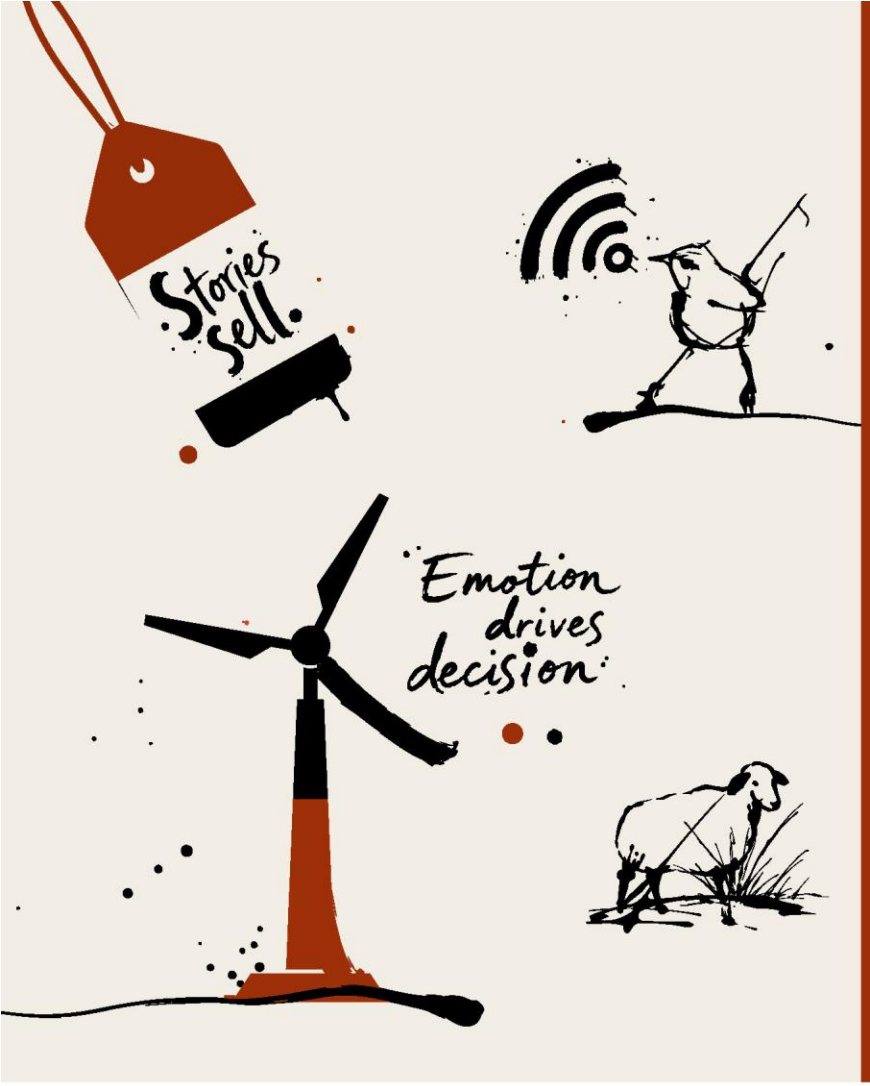
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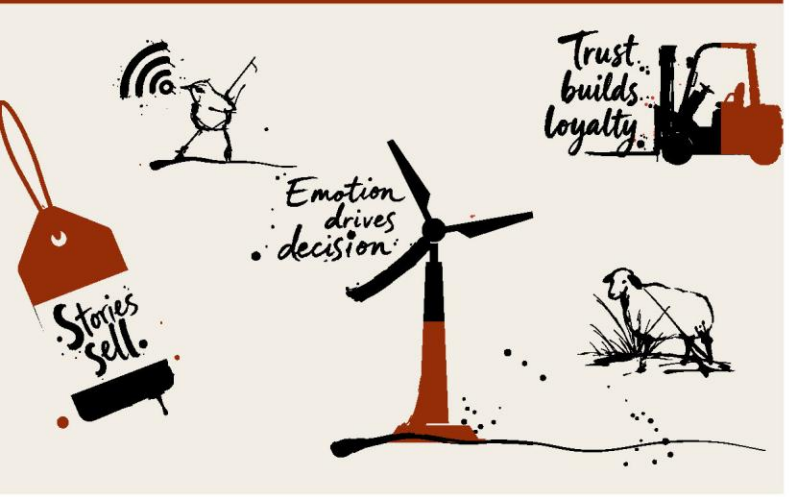
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COMMUNICATING THE RURAL ECONOMY



A masterclass in storytelling

CLA

Headline Partner:

Knight Frank

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IM irwinmitchell

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A masterclass in storytelling

Sophie Gregory

Dairy farmer, Somerset

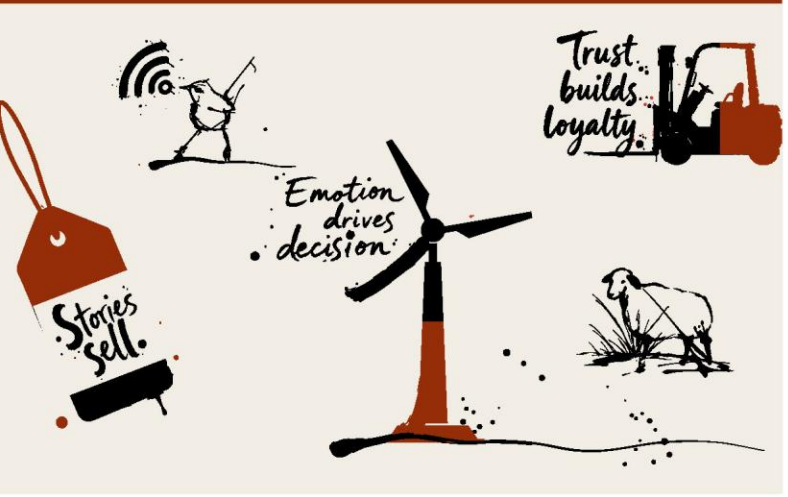
Ben King

Founder and CEO, Pesky Fish

Annette Richman

Managing Director, KOR Communications

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Sophie Gregory
Dairy farmer
Somerset

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WHO TELLS THE FARMING STORY?

If we don’t tell it, who will?



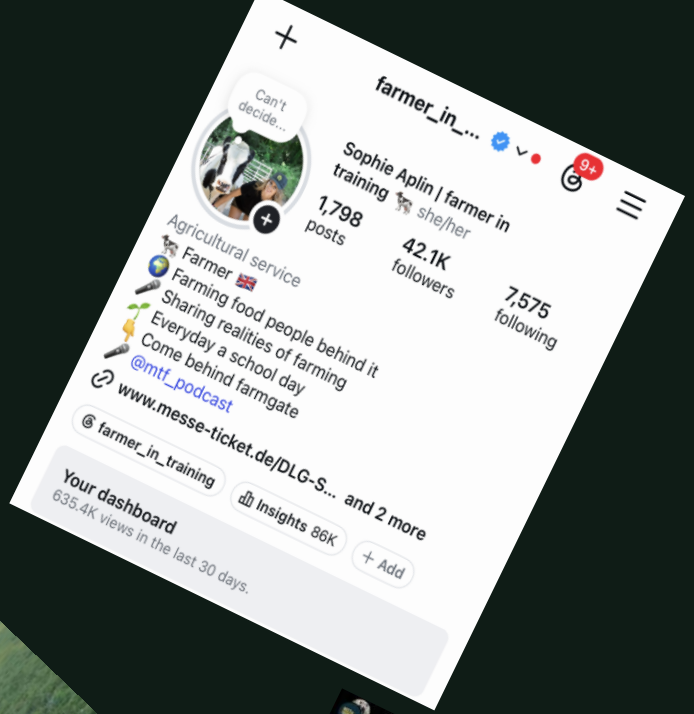
AN UNLIKELY FARMER

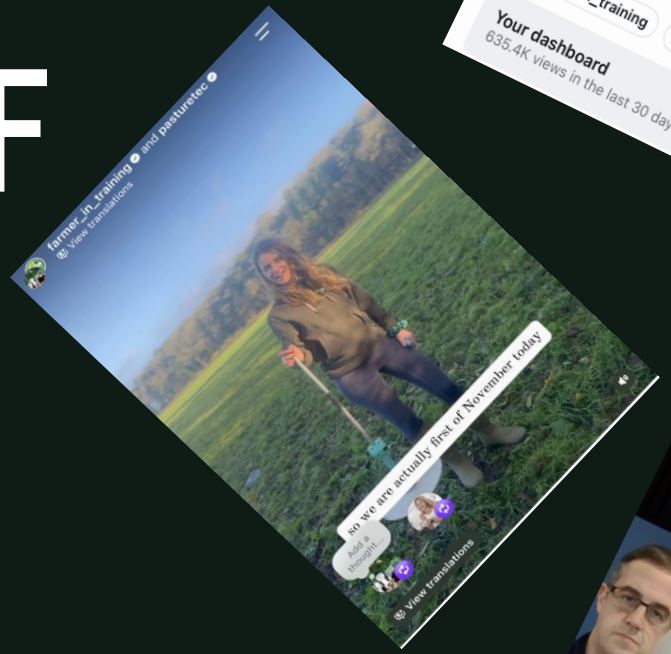
Not an inheritance. A journey.

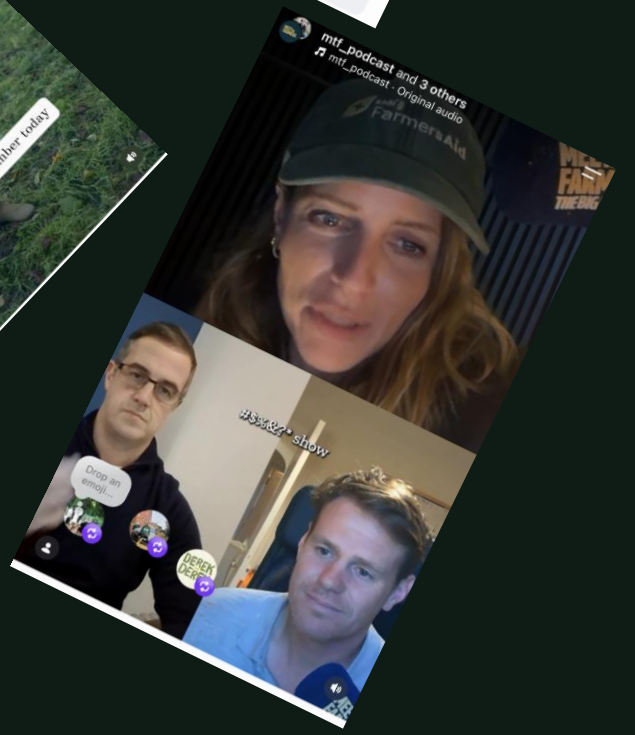


THE POWER OF SHOWING UP

The everyday is extraordinary to someone else.







OPEN THE GATE

A real conversation changes perceptions.



WHERE A STORY CAN TAKE YOU

From the farmyard to wider conversations.



TELL THE DIFFICULT STORIES TOO

Credibility comes from honesty, not perfection.



SHOW UP
OPEN UP
SPEAK UP

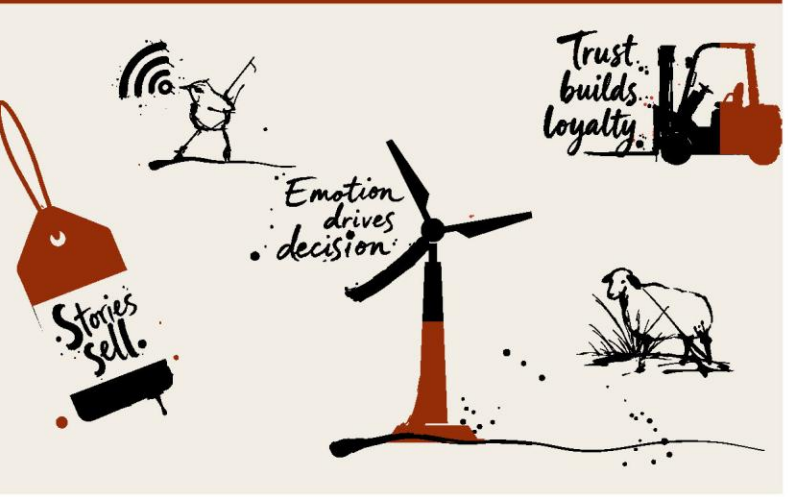
Three practical things every rural business can do.



IF YOU'RE NOT AT THE TABLE, YOU'RE ON THE MENU



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Founder and CEO
Pesky Fish

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Telling your story



Goal for comms to support?

Feel like you need to be ‘out there’?

Finding that it’s not paying off?

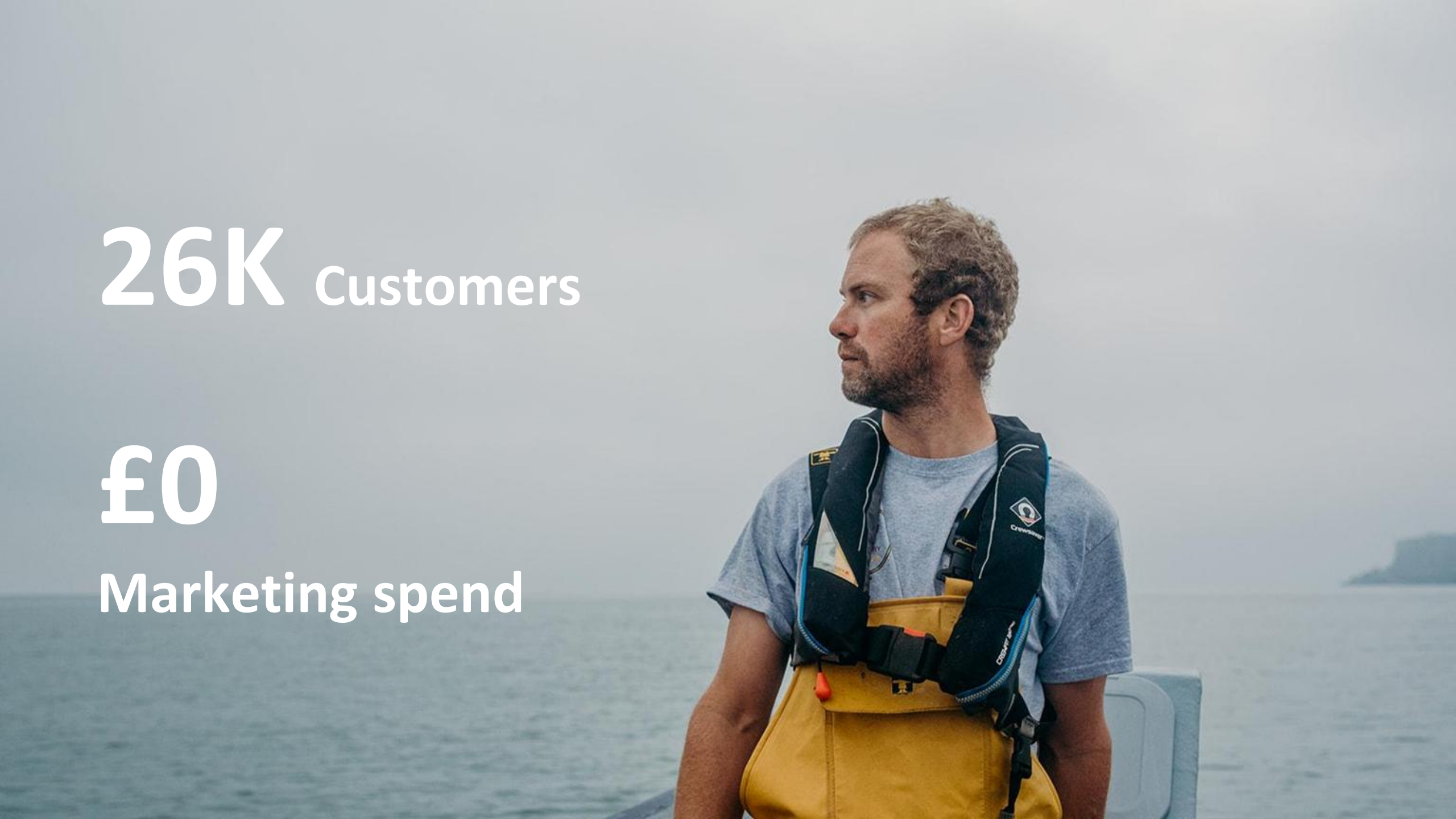
Regenerate marine environments

Daily fish market, delivering across the UK

26K Customers

£0

Marketing spend





50%

Organic social

50%

Organic referral

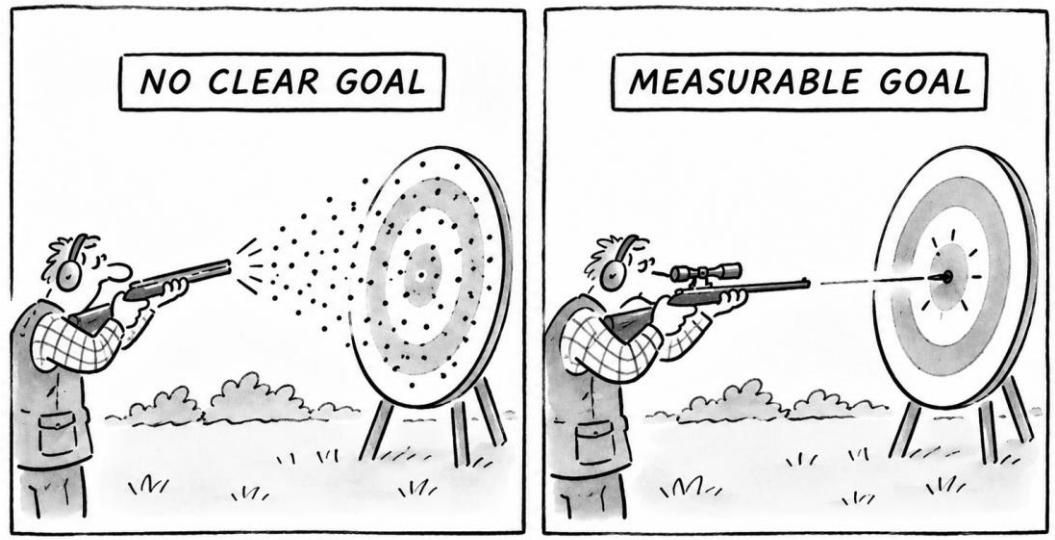
Don’t start by telling your story



Absolute clarity of measurable goal

Absolute empathy for audience

Absolute clarity of measurable goal





Absolute empathy for audience

Absolute clarity of measurable goal

Profitable throughput

New buyers **Retention** **£GM/box**

Absolute empathy for audience

Access

Value

Health

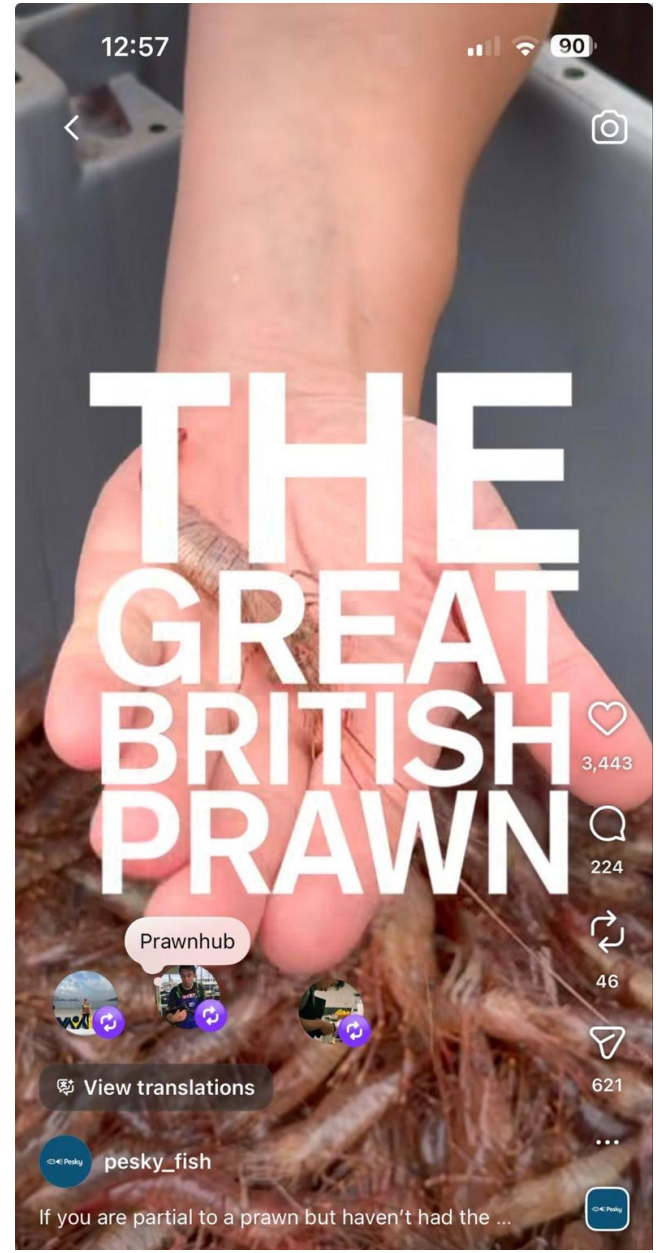
Sustainability

Social currency

Fear of inferiority


THE
GREAT
BRITISH
PRAWN




12:57
90
THE GREAT BRITISH PRAWN
3,443
224
46
621
Prawnhub
View translations
pesky_fish
If you are partial to a prawn but haven't had the ...

Absolute clarity of measurable goal

Profitable throughput

2700 new buyers

⅓ return in 28 days

62% GM

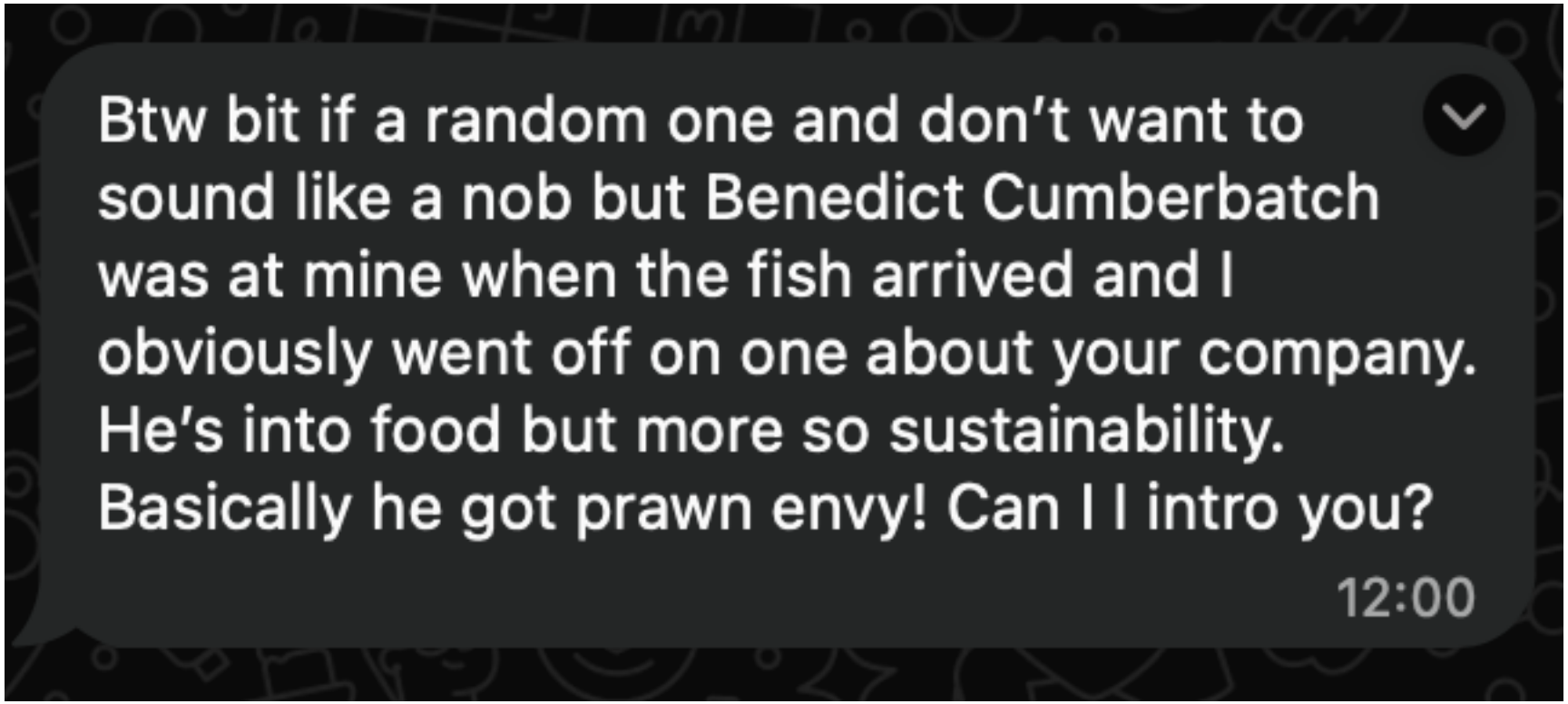
Absolute empathy for audience

★★★★★
Joao E. Verified
So good that I bought 7 packs

★★★★★
james F. Verified
Incredible!!! Best prawns I've ever had....

★★★★★ 13/03/2026
John S. Verified
OMG they took me back to my childhood when we would catch them in bicycle wheels with the spokes removed and covered in net curtains to make a drop net. Absolutely sweet prawns not likethe one's in the supermarket

★★★★★ 06/01/2026
Benji Verified
Have bought these 5 times. Love them more every time. You just don't find that sweetness in any other meat - on land or undersea! Thank you for bringing them to us.


Btw bit if a random one and don't want to sound like a nob but Benedict Cumberbatch was at mine when the fish arrived and I obviously went off on one about your company. He's into food but more so sustainability. Basically he got prawn envy! Can I I intro you?
12:00

Don’t start by telling your story



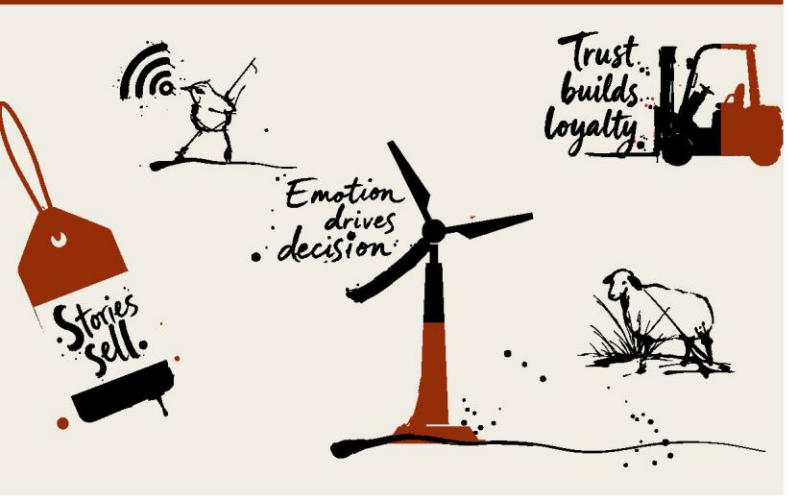
Communicate so well others want to tell YOUR story



Absolute clarity of measurable goal

Absolute empathy for audience

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Annette Richman
Managing Director
KOR Communications

CLA

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CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Planning for the worst, hoping for the best

Annette Richman - Managing Director
KOR Communications

CASE STUDY

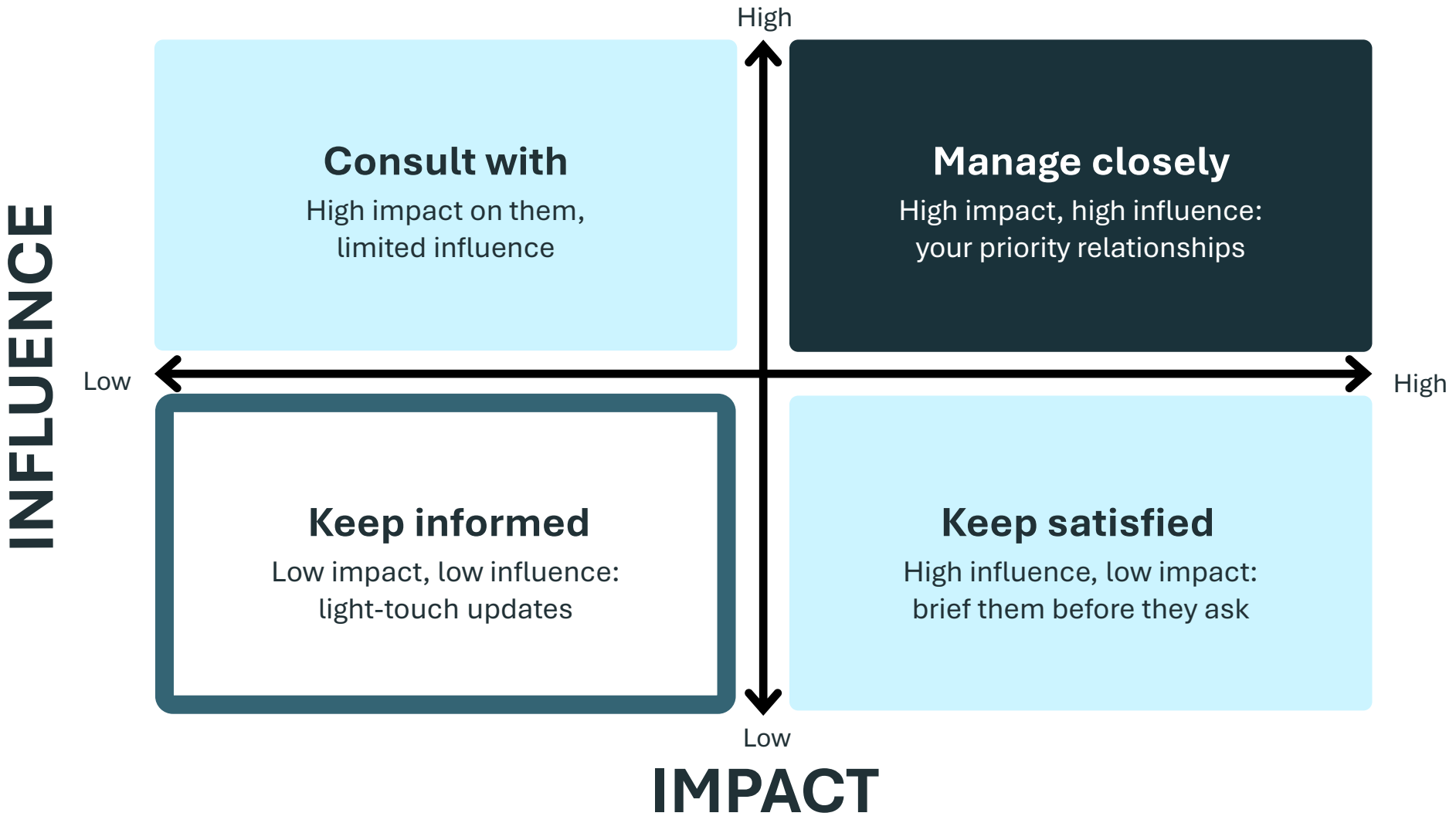
Rural crises



IMPACT INFLUENCE MATRIX

Mapping Stakeholders

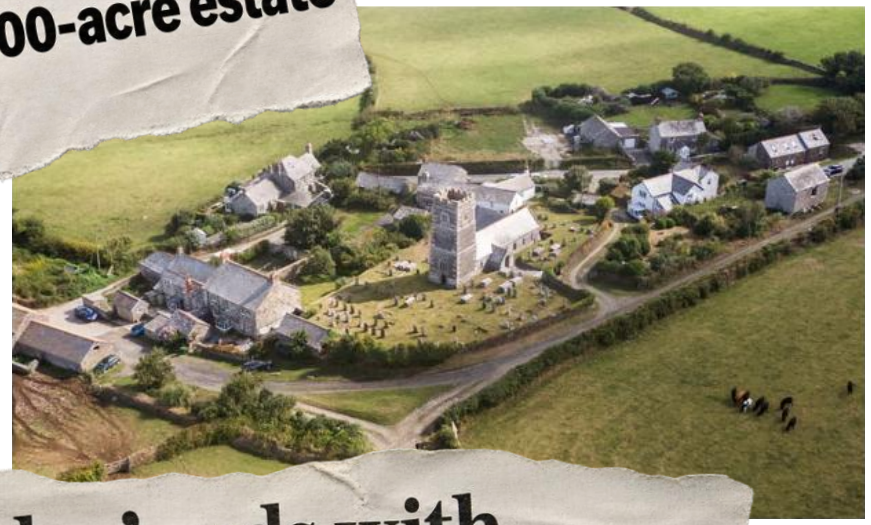
KOR



CASE STUDY

Battle of Trevalga

'Let The Battle of Trevalga Commence': Tight-knit community in idyllic Cornish hamlet vow to fight against threat of eviction after trust puts 1,200-acre estate up for sale for £15million



‘Battle of Trevalga’ ends with Cornish estate’s sale to property giant

CASE STUDY

Diversification on a shooting estate



CRISIS PLANNING

Five-Point Plan

KOR



Predict



Protect



Prepare



Respond



Recover

THE FIVE ENDURING TRUTHS

The Ipsos Reputation Council Report 2026

- Trust remains the ultimate currency
- Audiences matter more than messages
- Actions speak louder than declarations
- Consistency matters more than agreement
- Human judgement remains indispensable

KOR

If you are not in charge of your narrative, someone else will be

EMAIL

hello@korpr.co.uk

WEB

www.korpr.co.uk

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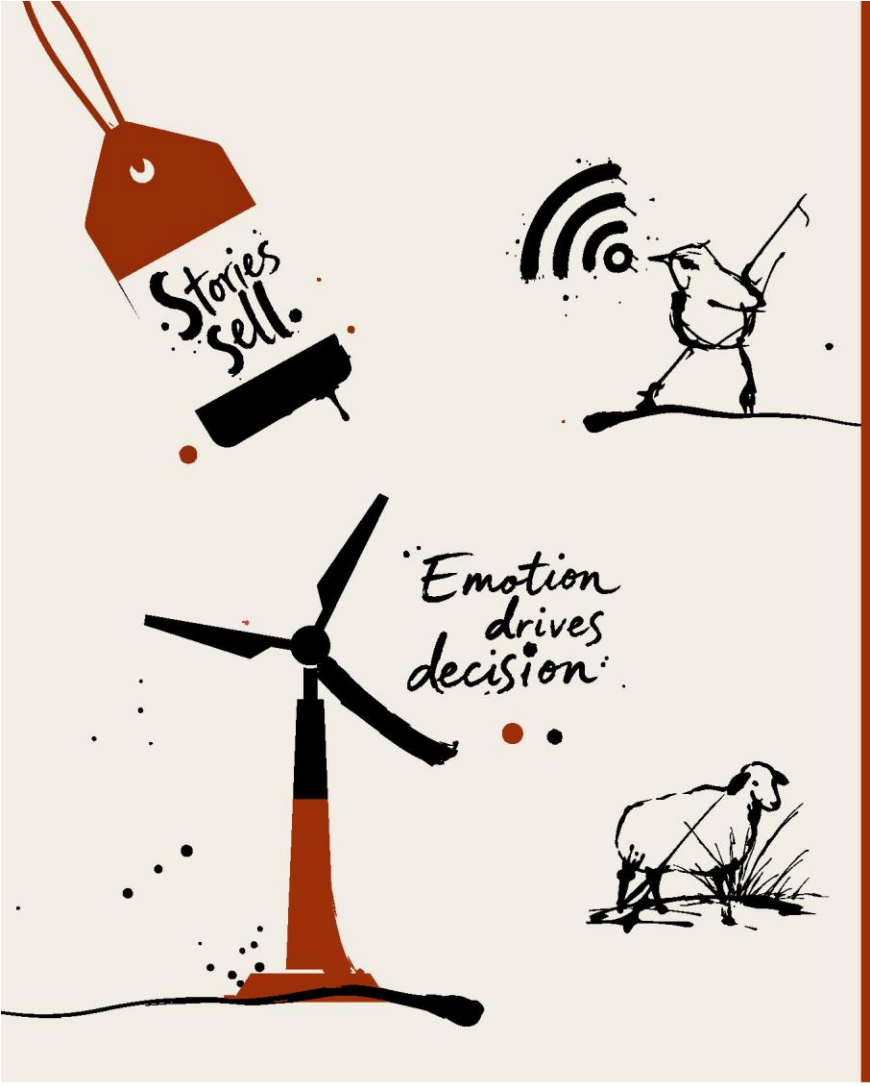
A masterclass in storytelling

Eliza Ecclestone – CLA Vice President

Sophie Gregory – Dairy farmer, Somerset

Ben King – Founder and CEO, Pesky Fish

Annette Richman – Managing Director, KOR Communications



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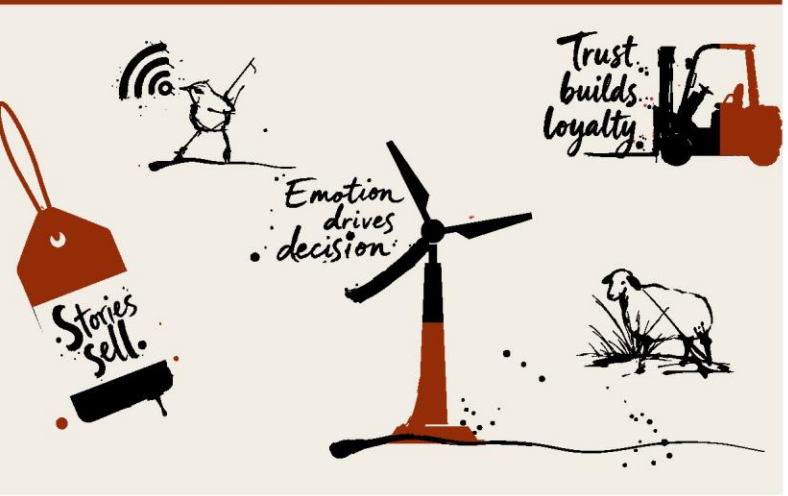
LANDING YOUR STORY



Get support from providers who understand your business needs.

Don’t forget to speak to CLA Member Services and event sponsors during the break.

LANDING YOUR STORY COMMUNICATING THE RURAL ECONOMY



Read the conference programme:

Scan the QR code

CLA

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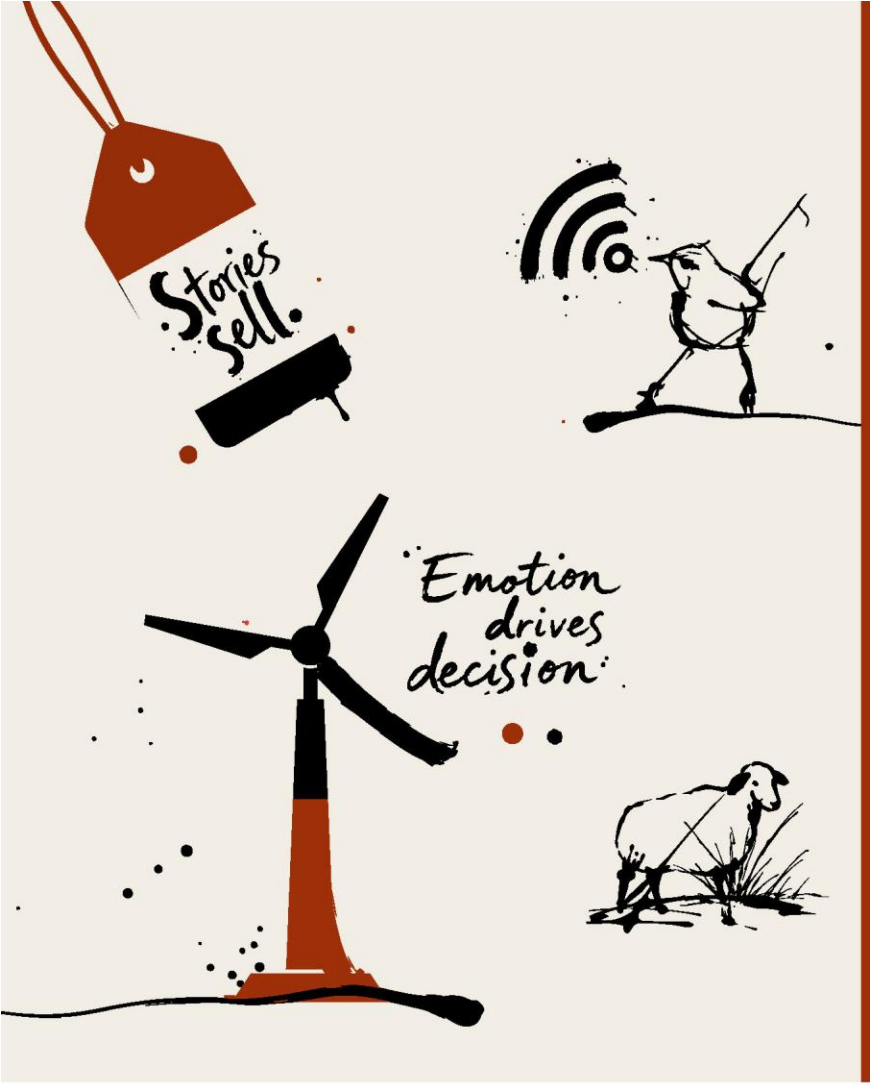
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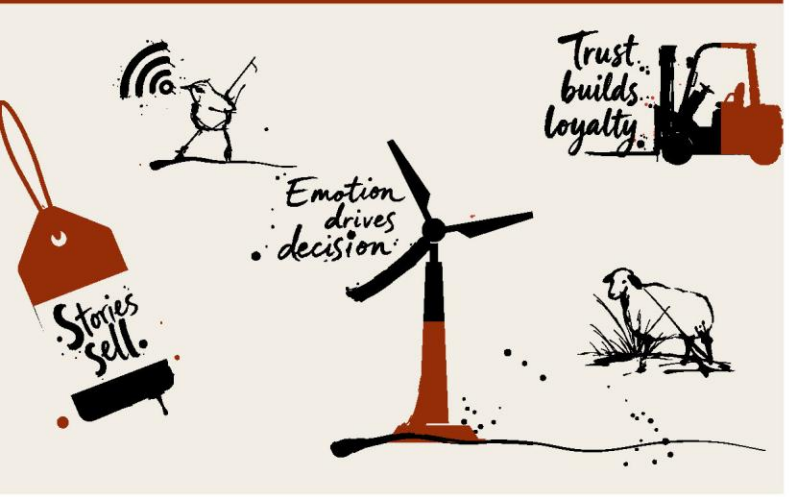
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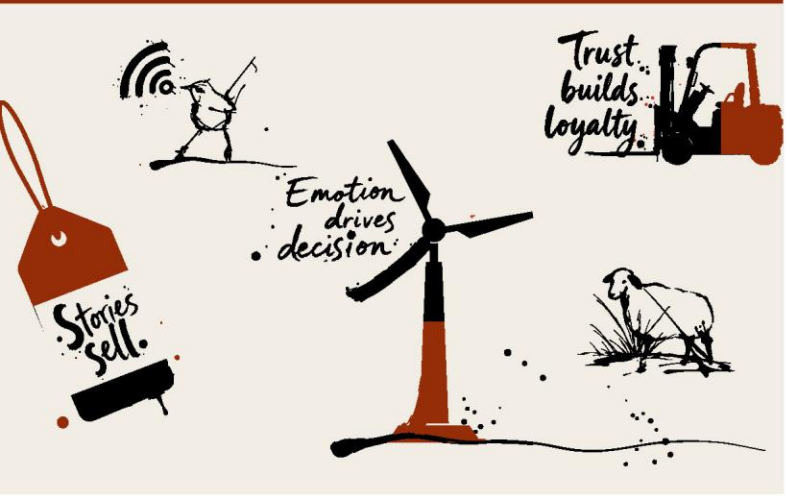
Jonathan Roberts
CLA Director of External Affairs

CLA

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Caroline Wilson &
Hannah Connors
CLA Charitable Trust

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The CLA Charitable Trust

Have your say **#RBC2026**

Multi-year funding

CLA CHARITABLE TRUST

We provide multi-year funding to four organisations that are aligned with our goals, offering ongoing support

COUNTRYSIDE LEARNING

Country Trust



FARMS FOR CITY CHILDREN

JAMIE'S FARM
CULTIVATING CHANGE

LANDING YOUR STORY

Emma Burgess

CLACT scholar

Harper Adams University

CLA CHARITABLE TRUST



Agriculture Student of the Year

Farmers Weekly Awards

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Holly Ziedler

CLACT scholar

Aberystwyth University



THE BZY SHEPHERD

@THEBZYSHEPHERD

THEBZYSHEPHERD@GMAIL.COM

The Bzy Shepherd – contract farming and farm sitting business

Have your say **#RBC2026**

LANDING YOUR STORY

Camp Jojo



£5,000 grant to support its new camp at Nags Farm,
working with CLA members Douglas and Alex Chalmers

Have your say **#RBC2026**

LANDING YOUR STORY

Thank you!

CLA CHARITABLE TRUST

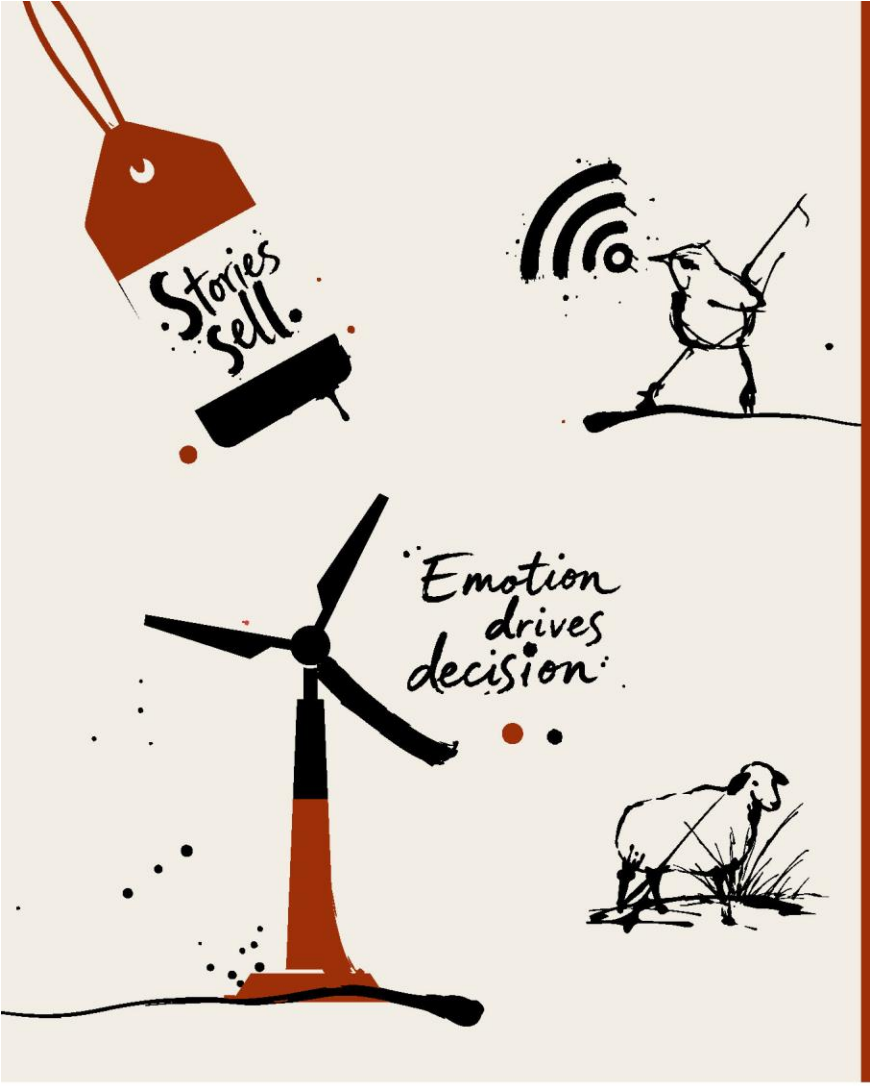
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cafdonate.cafonline.org/1372

Have your say **#RBC2026**

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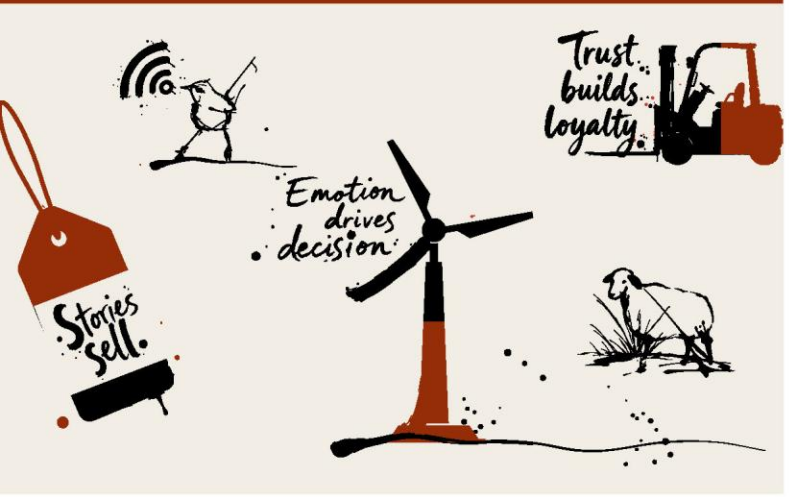
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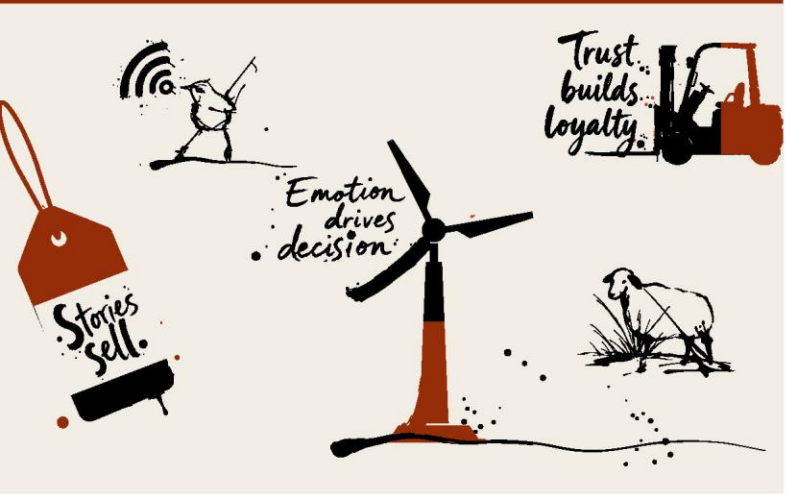
Rt Hon Victoria Atkins MP
Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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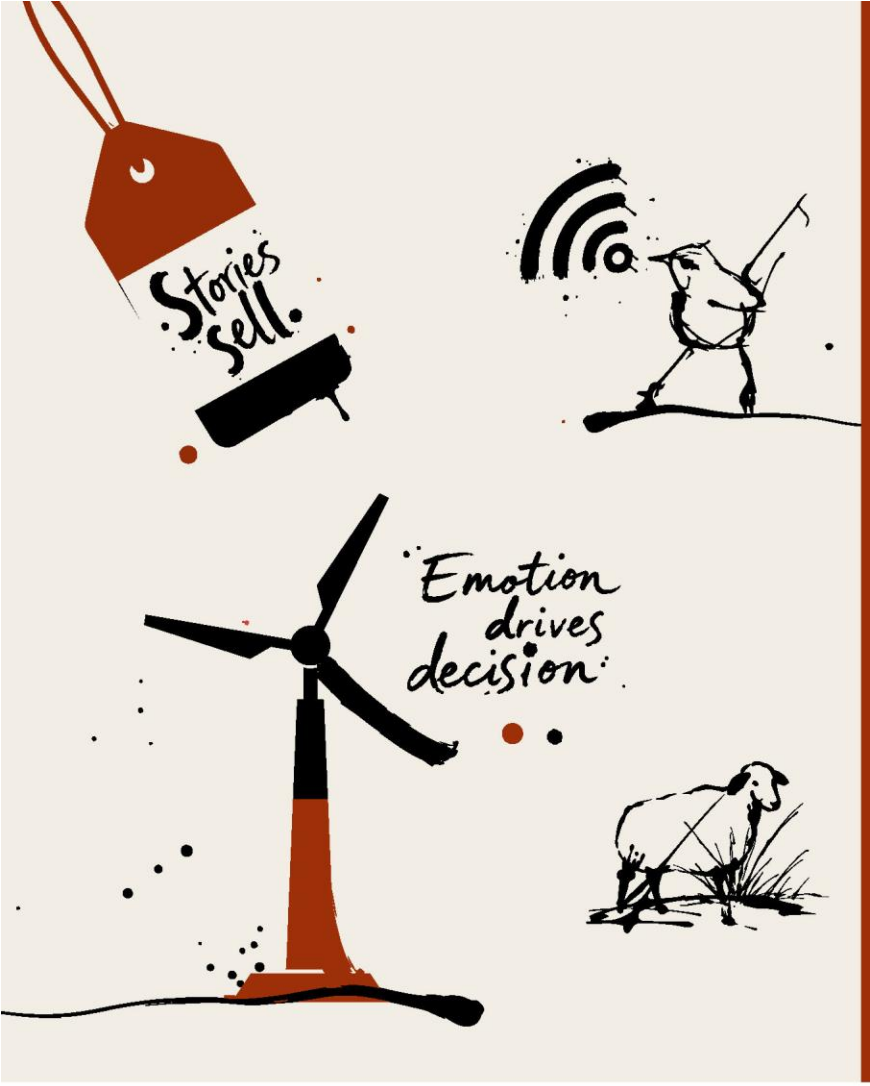
Joe Evans
CLA Deputy President

Rt Hon Victoria Atkins MP
Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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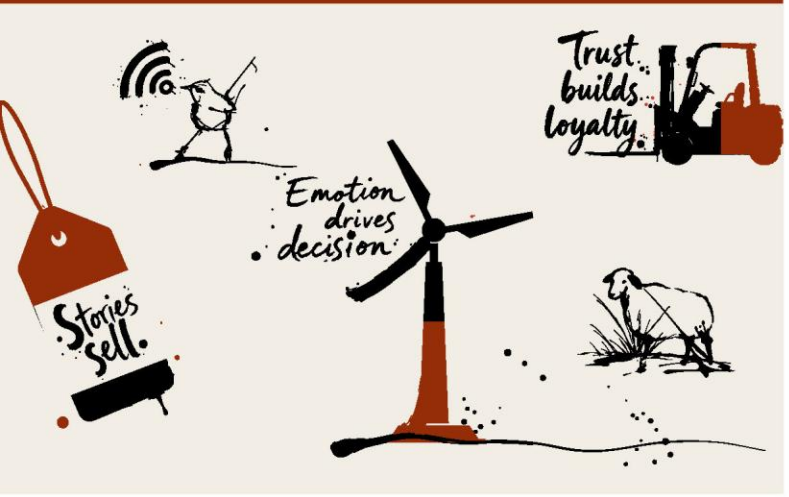
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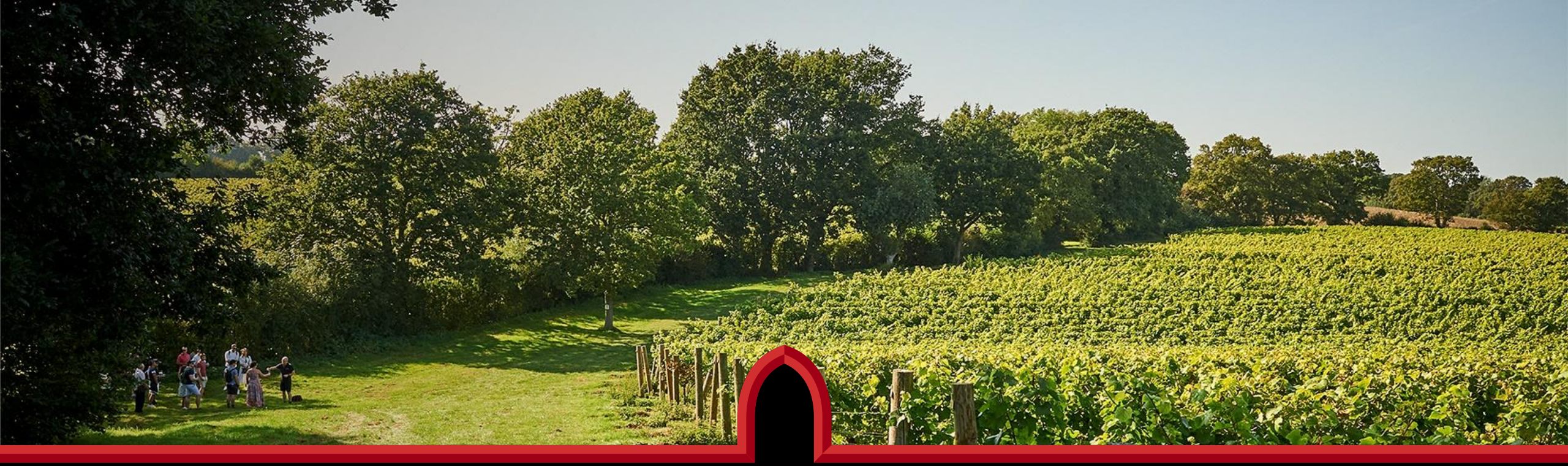


James Pennefather
CEO
Chapel Down Group

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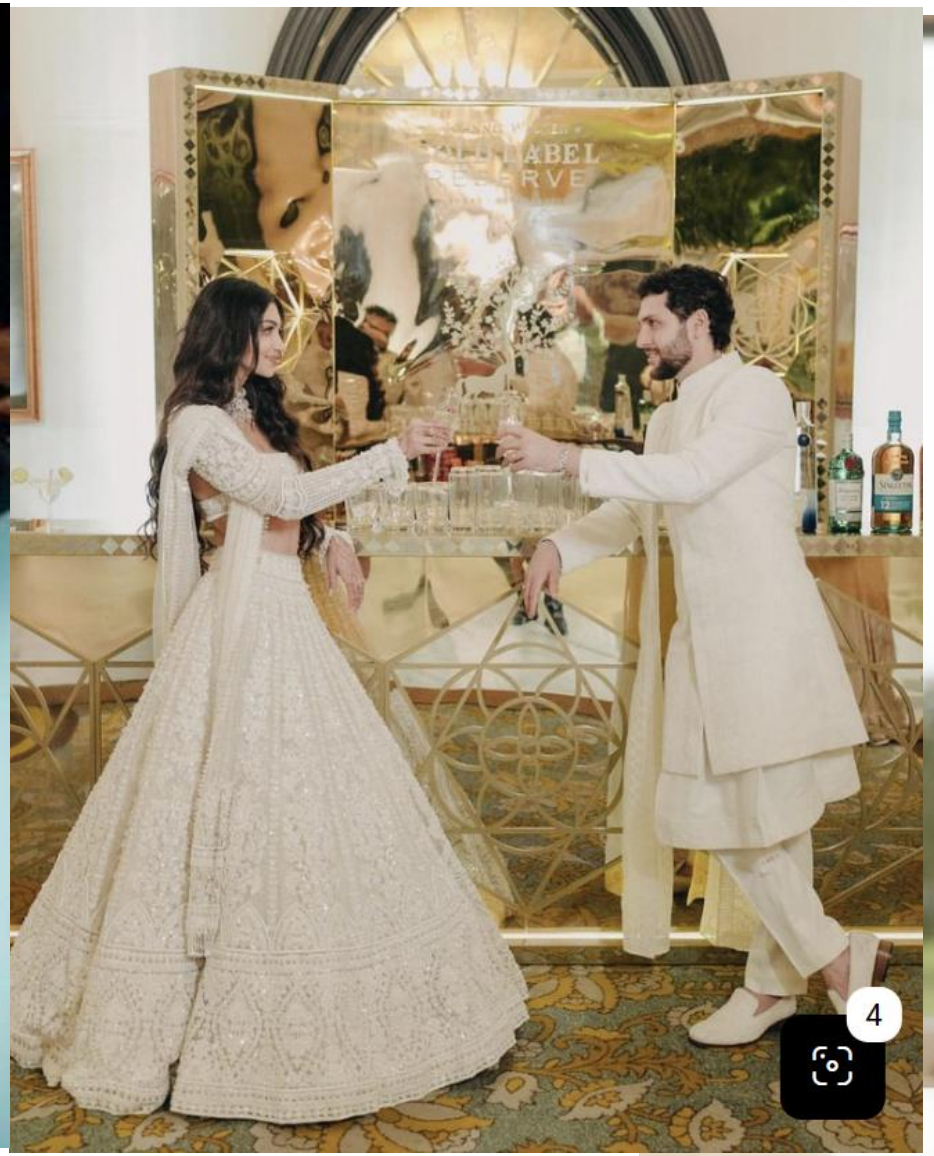
CHAPEL DOWN

STORYTELLING IN ENGLISH WINE

CLA Conference 19th November 2026




Glenfiddich
GRAN
RESERVA
21
GRAN


4


EST 2011
THE
LAKES
SINGLE MALT
WHISKY
VOYAGE
700ML 49% ALC/VOL
Made in England



WHAT MAKES ENGLISH SPARKLING WINE DIFFERENT

SOIL



TRADITIONAL METHOD



Same as Champagne

- Finesse, elegance, balance, precision & complexity

CLIMATE



Same as Champagne 50 years ago

- Fresh, crisp & zesty

INNOVATION



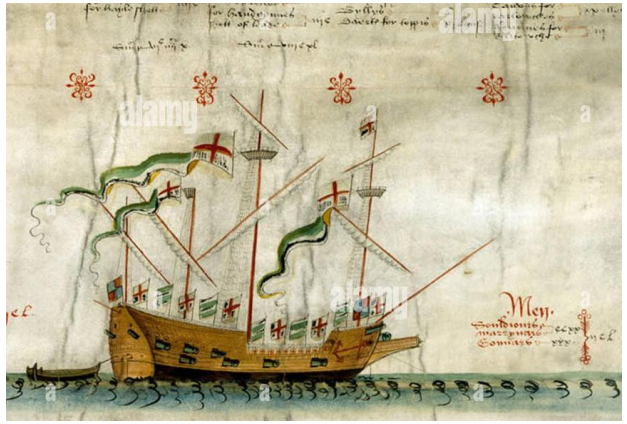
Unconstrained by Champagne's rule book

- Vitality & intensity
- Quality & consistency
- Sustainability


CHAPEL DOWN
KIT'S COTY
COEUR DE CUVÉE
2017
CHAPEL DOWN
SINGLE VINEYARD
2017
VINTAGE
CHAPEL DOWN
KIT'S COTY
COEUR DE CUVÉE
SINGLE VINEYARD



8 BRAND STORIES



Maritime climate



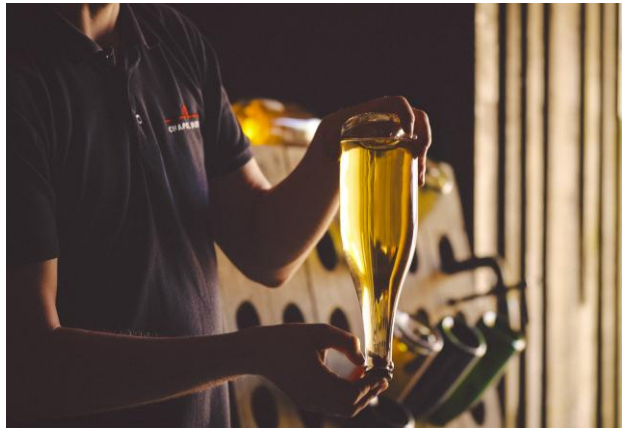
Pioneering since 1977



Chalk downs



Winemaking philosophy



Traditional method



Ambitious British brand



Sustainability



Community

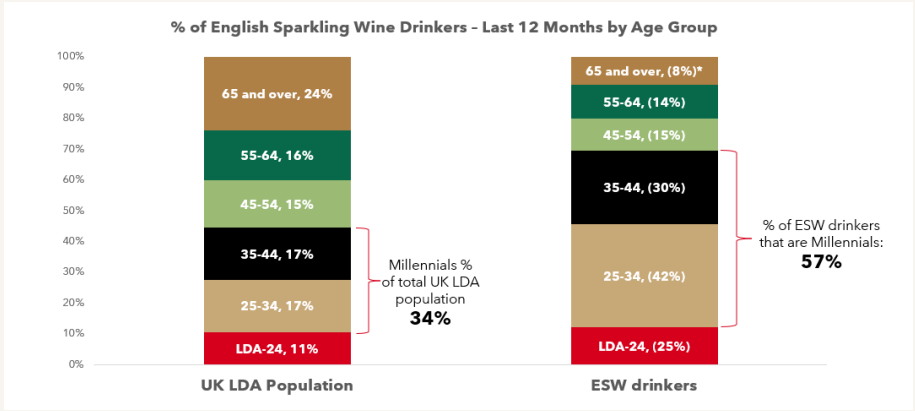
10,000 RETAIL SHAREHOLDERS



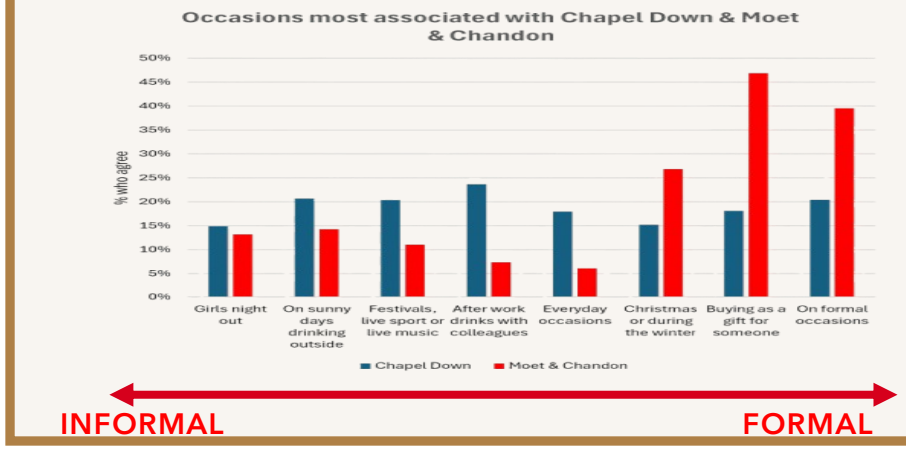
Platinum shareholders 10,000+ shares	Gold shareholders 2,000 - 9,999 shares	Silver shareholders 1-1,999 shares
• Ongoing 33% off wine purchases	• Ongoing 33% off wine purchases	• Annual 25% discount voucher
• Annual guided tour voucher for four	• Annual guided tour voucher for two	
• 25% off food at The Swan (max four guests)	• 25% off food at The Swan (max four guests)	
• 25% off non-wine purchases at the winery shop	• 25% off non-wine purchases at the winery shop	
• Early booking access to events and exclusive invitations (priority access)	• Early booking access to events and exclusive invitations	
• Complimentary standard delivery of online orders		

FOUR ENCOURAGING SIGNS FOR ENGLISH SPARKLING WINE IN THE UK

1. GENERATIONAL SHIFT INTO ENGLISH SPARKLING WINE



2. ASSOCIATION WITH LESS FORMAL CELEBRATION OCCASIONS



3. STRONG GROWTH MOMENTUM

Off-Trade MAT Value to 11/7/26	
CATEGORY	**52wk % CHG**
TOTAL SPARKLING INCL CHAMPAGNE	0%
PROSECCO	-2%
CHAMPAGNE	2%
CAVA	-10%
ENGLISH SPARKLING WINE	14%

4. STRUCTURAL TAILWINDS

47%
Sparkling Wine penetration in UK
[France: 78%; UK Still Wine 64%]

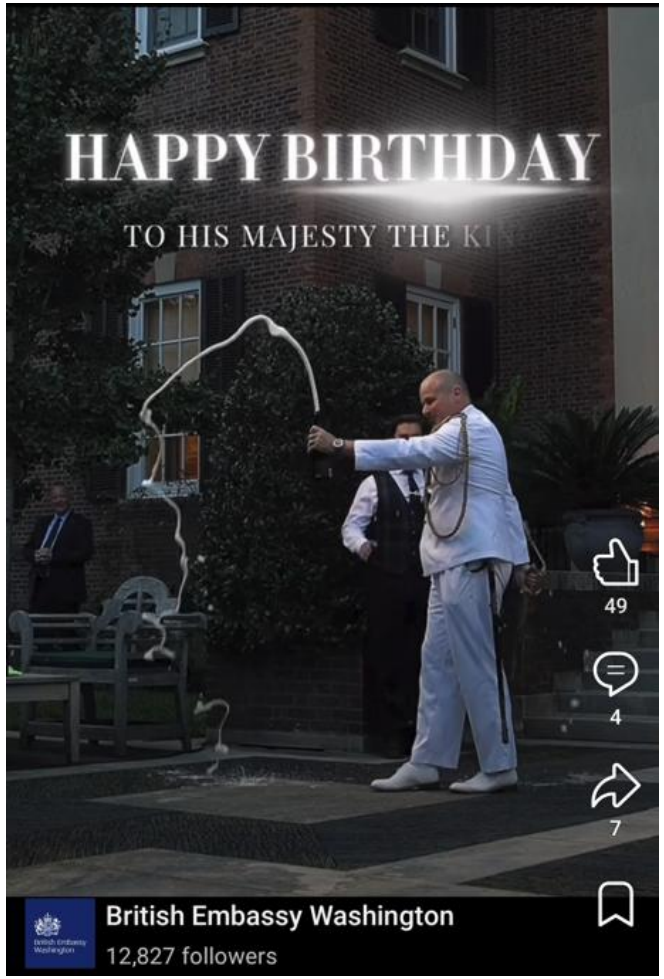
50%
People who agree "ESW is high quality"
[2021: 40%; Champagne: 58%]

Source: IWSR UK Sparkling Wine Landscape 2025 & ONS Census Population 2024. Brand Vue (AB 25-44) Jun 2025. NIQ UK Off Trade Sparkling Wines – MAT to 11/07/2026. LDA = Legal Drinking Age. MAT = Moving Annual Total

INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION











CHAPEL DOWN

UNAUDITED INTERIM RESULTS 2026

+19%
Net sales revenue growth

+28%
Gross profit growth
(gross margin+3.5ppt)

+27%
Adjusted EBITDA growth

37%
English sparkling wine market share (off-trade) [1]

+26%
Traditional Method Sparkling growth (74% of wine sales)

31
Number of US states distributed in (+20 vs PY)

1.Source: NIQ UK Off Trade Sparkling Wines – MAT to 11/07/2026 (H1 2025: 35%).

INFLUENCERS









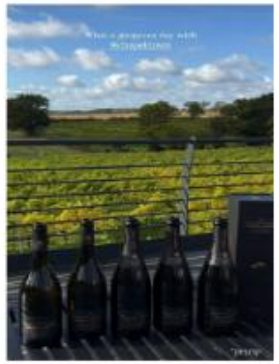






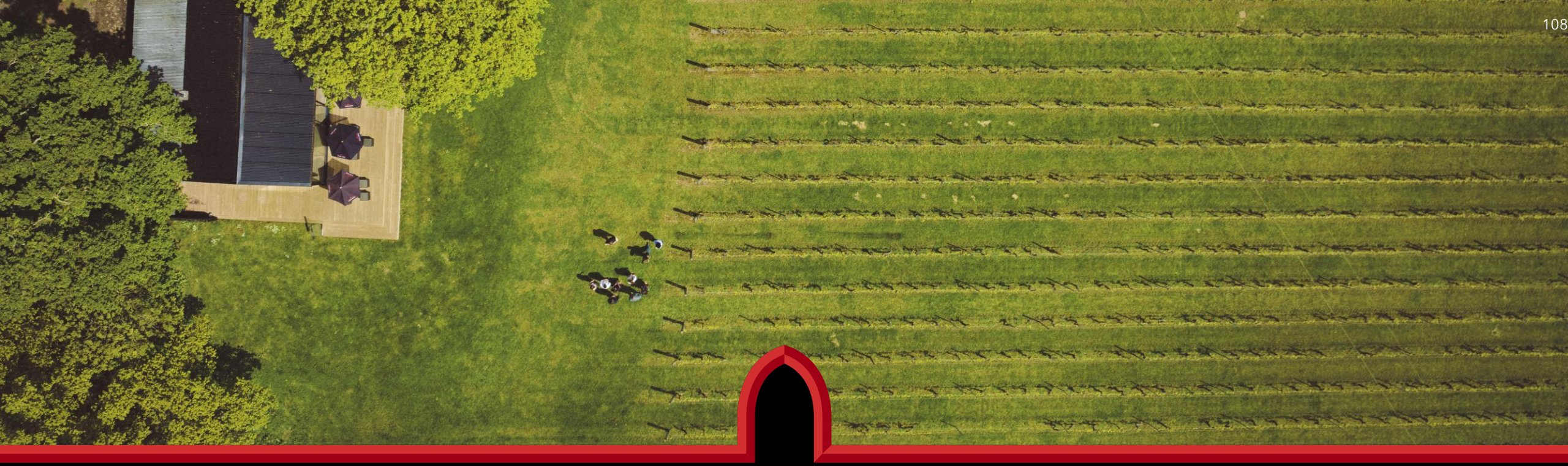








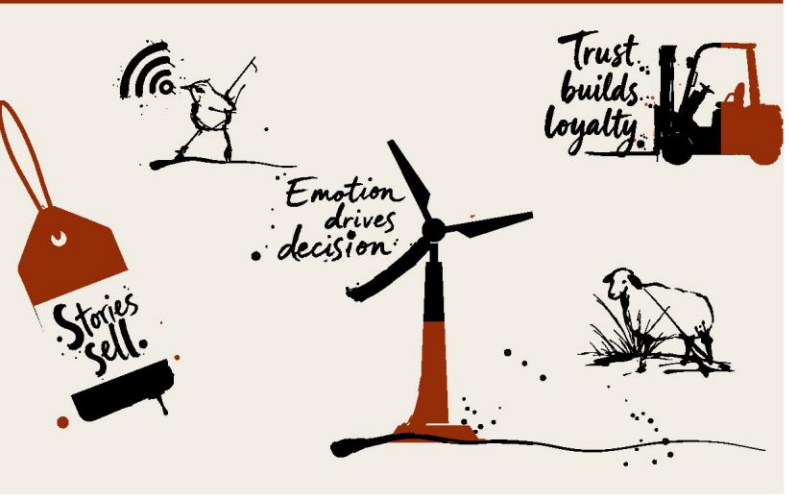




CHAPEL DOWN

THANK YOU

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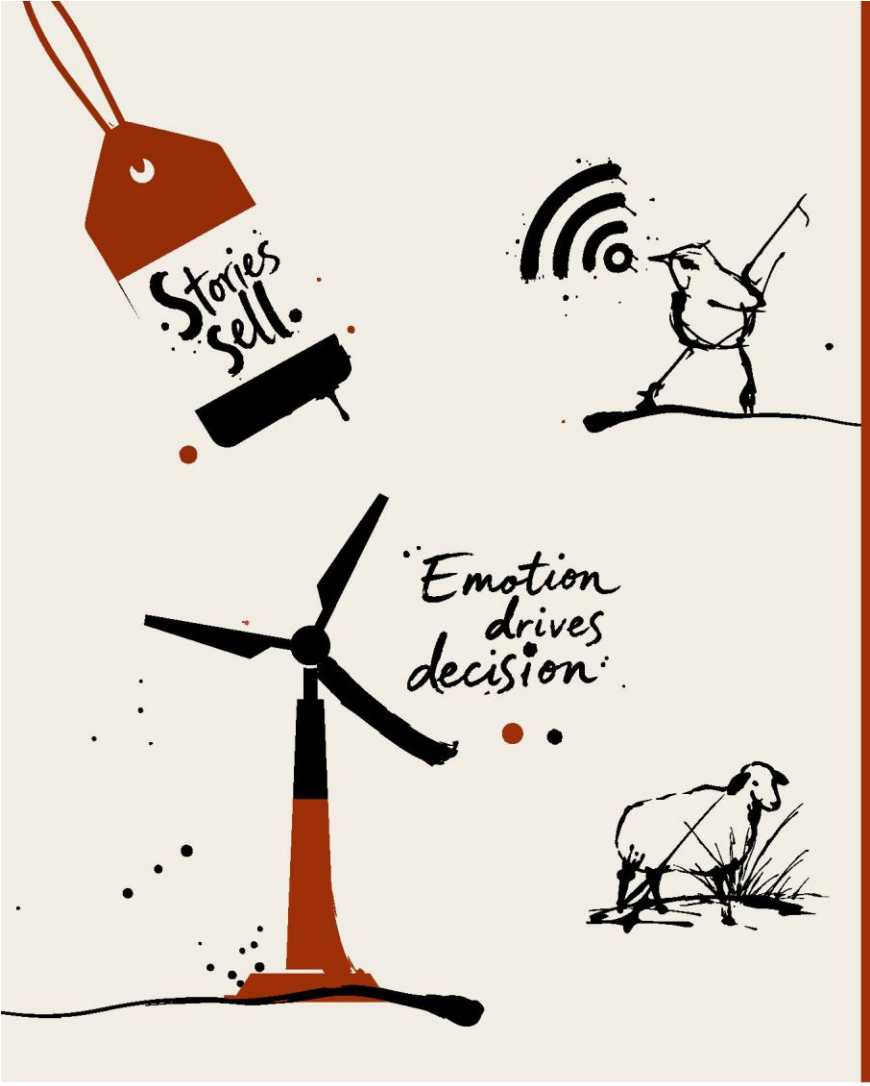
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Knight Frank

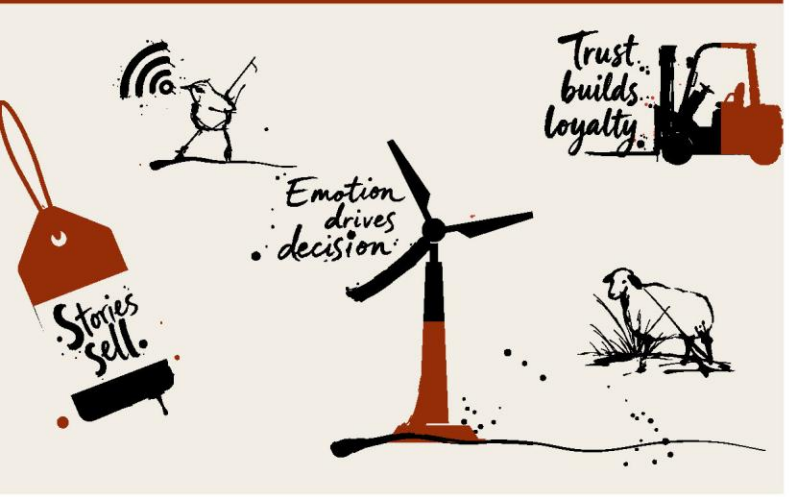
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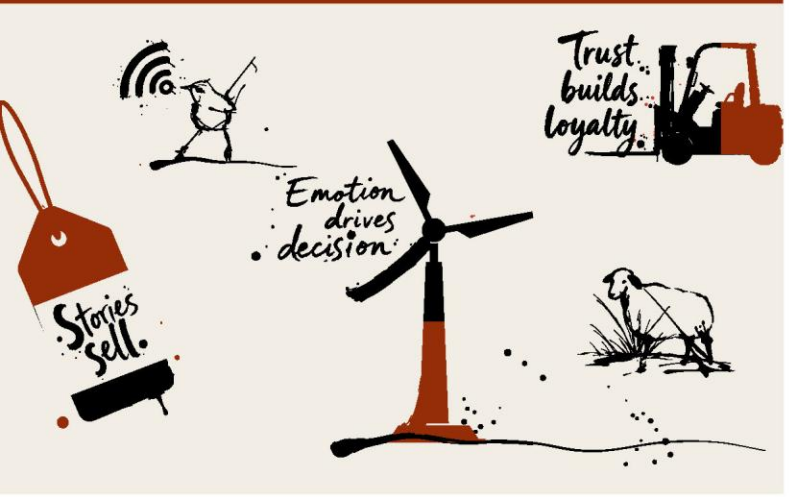
Rural Britain in 2035 – What story do we want tell?

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Judicaelle Hammond
CLA Director of Policy and Advice

CLA

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LANDING YOUR STORY

Fast forward to 2035…

Land-based businesses are resilient and profitable

The ‘happy path’



Have your say **#RBC2026**



LANDING YOUR STORY

The workshops

Why 2035?	This Parliament and the next: the business plan span
Aim	Identify, assess, mitigate threats & maximise opportunities
With	Experts from within and outside the sector
Method	‘Back-casting’



LANDING YOUR STORY

So, what underpins the ‘happy path’?

- **Climate adaptation.** At national, local and individual business level, especially for water.
- **Government long-term framework and direction.** Workable regulation + adaptable local delivery plans → confidence.
- **Diversity of operating models.** Beyond binary debates.
- **Soil health.** Key for farming, forestry, nature and water.
- **‘Critical infrastructure’.** E.g. abattoirs, storage, sawmills, transport, water, data systems, maintenance. *There and resilient by design*.
- **Collaboration.** Takes many forms.

LANDING YOUR STORY

Answer our poll:

For my business to be profitable and resilient in 2035, I need…” (choose 3 options)

1. **Climate** adaptation measures
2. **Long-term policy vision** from government (goals and outcomes)
3. **Policy delivery** that is local, adaptable, supported by training & advice and insulated from political whims
4. **Fair and proportionate regulation**, with enough transition time and funding
5. **Soil** health
6. **‘Critical infrastructure**’ and better access to it

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"For my business to be profitable and resilient in 2035, I need..." (choose 3 options)

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Rural Britain in 2035 – What story do we want tell?

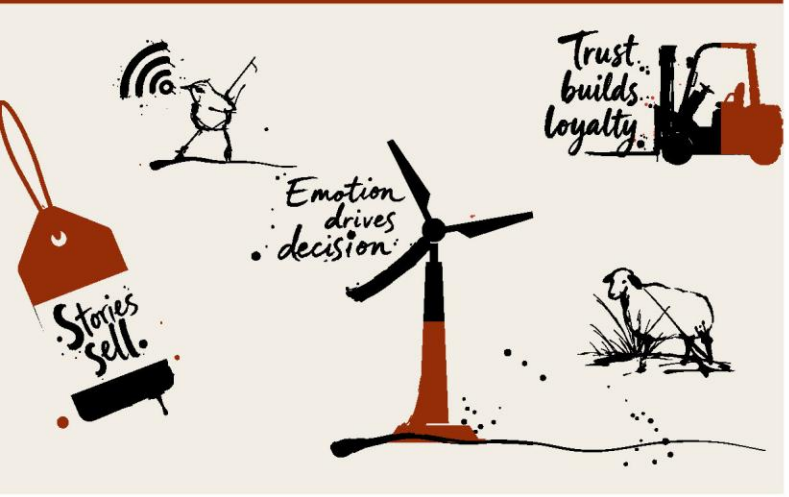
Judicaelle Hammond – CLA Director of Policy and Advice

Mark Williams – Beef, sheep and poultry farmer, Mid Wales

Emma Fletcher – Innovation Director, Octopus Energy Homes

David Harvey – Farmer at Wickham Hall, Hertfordshire

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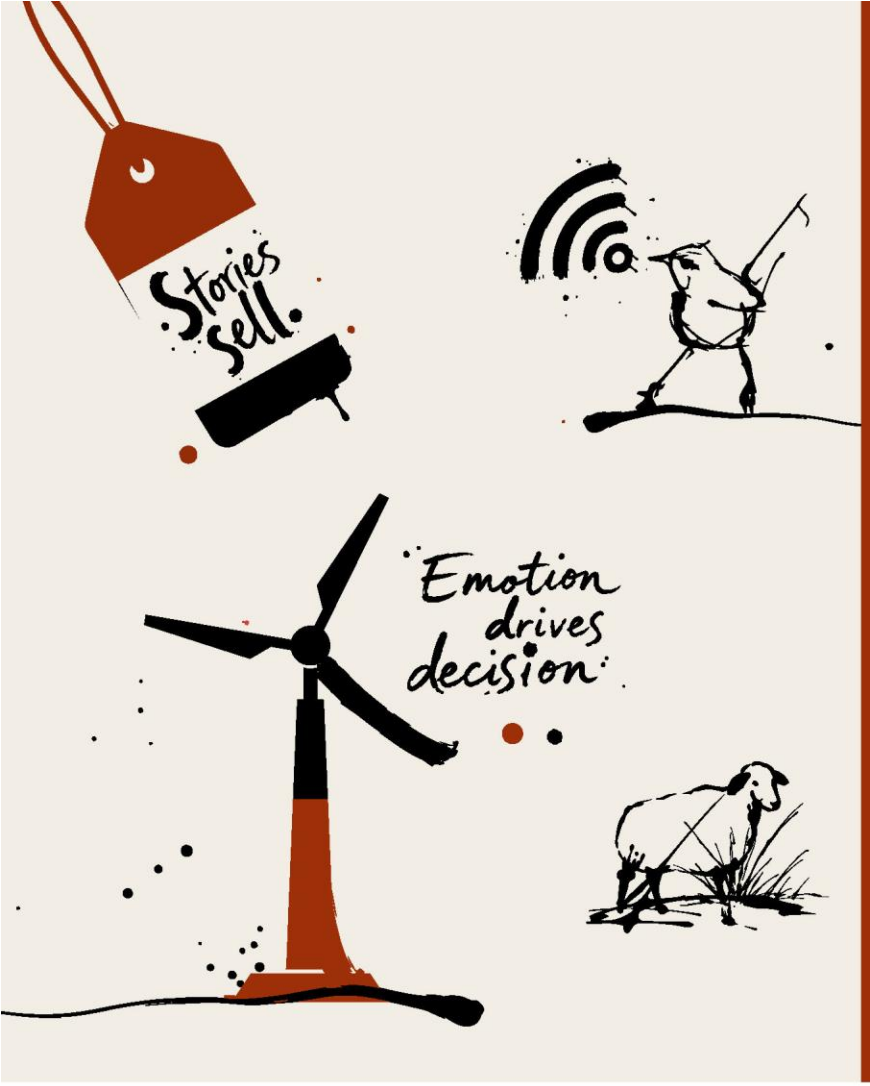


Joe Evans
CLA Deputy President

CLA

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