Speaker Profiles

The Rt Hon Victoria Atkins MP
Victoria has been the Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs since November 2024, leading the Official Opposition's positions on farming and rural affairs. She was first elected as MP for Louth and Horncastle in 2015 and held several ministerial roles in the last government, including periods as Health Secretary and Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

The Rt Hon Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP
Angela was appointed the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in July 2026, having been first elected as the MP for Wallasey in July 2024. Since entering Parliament, she has held a number of ministerial positions, including Minister of State at the Home Office and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as well as Minister for Border Security and Asylum at the Home Office.

Joe Evans
CLA Deputy President
Joe grew up on his family farm in Herefordshire and spent much of the first decade of his career working for HSBC Group in Asia. In 2012 he and his wife Keeley returned 'home' where he took over the day-to-day running of Whitbourne estate from his father. The estate has three farming tenants, a few residential properties, high-quality woodland, a care farm charity, and an events venue that he opened just before the pandemic struck. Working together with one of his farming tenants, Joe runs the home farm as an extensive organic grazing enterprise with significant focus on environmental stewardship schemes.

Emma Fletcher
Octopus Energy Homes
Emma is the Innovation Director at Octopus Energy Homes. Her career has centered on leading high-impact, high-innovation projects in real estate, with a particular focus on housing, energy performance and green energy production. Her practical experience includes starting her career in rural surveying and estate management moving into award-winning housing and regeneration developments. Emma is a passionate advocate for change, community resilience and sustainability solutions for all. She established and led the UK's first fossil fuel-free district heating scheme in her village, Swaffham Prior. Her work regularly features in trade, national and international press and media.

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Sophie Gregory
Dairy farmer, Somerset
Sophie is a first-generation dairy farmer, communicator and advocate for British agriculture. Alongside her husband Tom, Sophie built a business from scratch, she now runs two dairy farms in the South West, with a passion for cows, people, organic dairy and opening the farm gates to connect the next generation with food and farming. She is an Arla Board of Representatives member, NFU Dairy Board member and Nuffield Scholar, using her voice to champion honest conversations, practical progress and a more resilient future for dairy.

David Harvey
Farmer, Hertfordshire
David is a third-generation farmer at Wickham Hall which is located close to Bishop's Stortford on the Hertfordshire Essex border. The agricultural business, both in hand farming and contracting, is now run by his son Patrick. He has developed a business park and has consent for a large-scale solar farm and a number of smaller diversifications. The various new alternative business interests are continuing and now involve the wider family.

He studied Agricultural Economics at Newcastle University before a Short Service Commission in the Army. His interests are in renewable energy, the environment with special interest in rivers, and the marine environment. He is also responsible for his family's farm in West Galloway where there are other renewable energy projects in planning.

Ben King
Founder and CEO, Pesky Fish
Ben is the Founder and Skipper of Pesky Fish – a seafood supply chain connecting UK buyers directly to the British regenerative fishing fleet. With the goal of using consumption to drive the restoration of fish stocks and the marine environments, Pesky supports over 100 UK vessels and 20,000 UK home buyers to trade through their 100% traceable chain.

Gavin Lane
CLA President
At 25, Gavin started farming on a contract farming arrangement with his father and now owns and farms land on two separate arable farms in Norfolk, both with large Countryside Stewardship schemes and using regenerative farming practices. With his wife Jane, Gavin has diversified into a holiday cottage letting business. He has also chaired the Education Committee of the Worshipful Company of Farmers and is a Nuffield Scholar. He spent two years as CLA Vice President and two years as CLA Deputy President before he was elected CLA President in November 2025.

Alex Newton
Deputy Director – Strategy and Development, More in Common UK
Alex is Deputy Director at More in Common UK. He leads much of More in Common's research and consultancy work with civil society organisations, charities and national institutions. Previously he has held senior management positions in national charities and campaigning organisations and worked as mediator in industrial disputes.

James Pennefather
Chapel Down Group
James spent 25 years working in the premium spirits industry for Diageo and William Grant & Sons in the UK, East Africa and India, specialising in luxury spirits and single malt whisky. He was subsequently CEO of The Lakes Distillery, where his family is from, ahead of a successful sale of that business in 2024.

He has been CEO of Chapel Down Group Plc since Feb 2025. Chapel Down is the leading English winemaker, listed on the AIM market, with over 1,000 acres of vineyards in Kent and a sparkling wine portfolio that is in rapid growth both in UK and internationally. Outside work, he is a keen amateur conservationist and is involved with various nature recovery projects in the Lake District.

Annette Richman
KOR Communications
Annette is the Managing Director and Founder of KOR Communications – a leading public relations and public affairs consultancy in the land and property sector. She has been working with landed estates for nearly 20 years, helping them navigate and manage crucial relationships with communities, stakeholders, politicians, and media to achieve their business objectives with integrity. Before setting up KOR, Annette worked as a journalist on the news desks of broadcasters Sky News and ITN and has wide experience of the way the news media works and the impact stories – both positive and negative – can have on clients, particularly when they are facing reputational threats. Annette also hosts KOR's Estate Matters podcast where those working in the land and property sector share some of their challenges and achievements, discussing how communication and engagement play a major part in their work.

Mark Williams
Farmer, Mid Wales
Mark is a beef, sheep and poultry farmer from Mid Wales, farming in partnership with his wife Helen and supported by their three young sons. They farm in the productive Severn valley and also the uplands of Wales, the majority being less favoured area rising to 1700ft. The land is very varied, with winter flooding being a challenge.

Mark started farming as a new entrant in the challenging year of 2001 largely as a tenant of his parents, taking full management control of a business soon focused him to get involved with lobbying and challenging decision-makers. After being fully involved in the local Young Farmers' Clubs (YFC) movement, Mark became the Wales YFC rural affairs chairman whose role was to engage politicians at the highest levels in Wales, Westminster and Europe. He currently sits on the Agricultural advisory panel for Wales, is an active member of the CLA, Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW) and a local Community Councillor. In his spare time enjoys the occasional days hunting and a new interest of off-road Enduro motorcycle riding, not as a participant but as support for his boys who race.