



Rt Hon Emma Reynolds MP
Secretary of State for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

3rd December 2025

Re: Devolving Farm and Nature-Recovery Funding to Cumbria

Dear Emma,

I'm writing to follow up on the call from leaders across Cumbria for a devolved approach to farm funding and nature-recovery. The case is clear: Cumbria is uniquely positioned to pilot a new model that puts decisions closer to the people who work our land and care for our landscapes.

Our county has the largest concentration of common land in England and a farming system deeply tied to our UNESCO World Heritage Site. Yet upland farms are under real pressure, with incomes falling and national schemes proving too complex and poorly suited to our terrain. A devolved settlement would allow us to design simpler, more effective support that strengthens rural livelihoods while accelerating nature recovery.

Cumbria also brings strong partnership working – between councils, the national park, local businesses, farmers, commoners, conservation groups and education institutions. This collaboration, combined with the presence of the Rural Payments Agency, Natural England and the Environment Agency in our county, means we can deliver a well-governed and high-impact pilot from day one.

With significant national investment planned for farming and nature recovery in the coming years, this is the right moment to test a devolved approach in an upland area. I would welcome the chance to work with you and your Department to shape a Cumbria pilot that delivers for farmers, nature and rural communities – and generates learning for the whole country.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

With very best wishes,

Josh MacAlister OBE MP
Labour MP for Whitehaven and Workington



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