



Kerry McCarthy MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020

Dear Ms McCarthy,

- Thank you for your questions about forestry and tree planting on the Church Commissioners' rural estate at Church Commissioner Questions in the House of Commons on November 26<sup>th</sup> and October 15<sup>th</sup>.

I understand that you have questioned the accuracy and consistency of some of the responses given. Please accept my apologies for any confusion resulting from the information we have provided through the responses at Church Commissioner Questions. Perhaps I could take this opportunity to provide some additional detail that might be helpful.

At the most recent exchange on November 26<sup>th</sup>, you asked: *“What proportion of agricultural land owned by the Church of England is high-quality grade 1 and 2 farmland?”*

This was answered: *“Approximately 35,000 acres of land owned by the Church Commissioners is high-quality grade 1 and 2 farmland, representing 39% of the overall agricultural portfolio. Information on diocesan land holdings is not held by the Church Commissioners.”*

I can confirm that this is correct – of the 89,500 acres of rural farmland held, some 35,400 acres, or 39%, is classified as grade 1 and 2.

In your supplementary question, you referred back to the answer given by the Second Church Estates Commissioner on 15<sup>th</sup> October that included the statement: *“...most of the rural estate is high-quality agricultural land...”*

I recognise that if *“high-quality agricultural land”* is interpreted as meaning *“grade 1 and 2 farmland”*, the use of the word *“most”* might not appear consistent with the figure of 39% quoted subsequently. However, I would add that land grade is only one element in determining land quality, which can of course also be influenced by various other factors including gradient, climate, flooding, soil limitations, and chemical limitations.

Additionally, grade 3 land can also support very productive and efficient farms due to the land being suitable for high yields of grass crops, which is key for some farming operations. Some 50,250 acres or 56% is classified as grade 3.

Taken together, we would consider that overall approximately 85,650 acres or 95% is regarded as high-quality agricultural land, with only about 4,000 acres of our rural farmland not regarded as high-quality land.

Once again, I am sorry for any confusion in relation to this issue. I hope this additional information has helped clarify the situation. Should you have any further questions about this, do please contact me directly, or the Second Church Estates Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,



Gareth Mostyn  
Chief Executive

Cc: Mr Andrew Selous MP, Second Church Estates Commissioner.