

Rt Hon Steve Reed
Secretary of State
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs



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3rd September 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Concerns Regarding the Consultation Process and aims of the Missing Lynx Project

I am writing on behalf of the National Sheep Association (NSA) to express serious concerns about the consultation process being undertaken by the Missing Lynx Project and the implications it holds for sheep farmers across England.

From the outset, the NSA has sought to engage constructively with the project team to ensure that the voices of those most affected – livestock farmers – are heard. However, our experience has been that engagement has been limited, selective, and, in our view, inadequate. The project has rejected invitations to attend our farmer meetings, meetings on farm, declined to participate in larger open forums, and instead opted to organise their own small, hand-picked groups of farmers to consult. This approach has excluded a broad spectrum of views from the farming community.

We are also concerned that some roadshows have been manned by volunteers who are not part of the Missing Lynx Project team and who, understandably, do not have a full grasp of the potential impact lynx reintroduction could have on sheep farming. As a result, the wider public is receiving a one-sided narrative, while farmers – although fewer in number – are those who stand to lose the most.

The consultation appears to be highly 'manufactured', lacking a genuine understanding of how and why farmers operate as they do in England. Proposed mitigation measures are often derived from overseas examples and are unlikely to be practical or effective within our farming systems. Furthermore, there is no clear plan for ongoing project management after any potential lynx release, including who would finance compensation for livestock losses, and who would be responsible for monitoring or removing a 'rogue' lynx should it begin targeting lambs or calves. We are aware of one farmer whose land borders the area identified for the potential release who has been inviting members of the Missing Lynx Project to visit his farm so he can explain and show them his concerns. To date, they have not taken this opportunity to meet with him.

Beyond the consultation process itself, the NSA has fundamental concerns about the reintroduction of an apex predator into our landscapes. There are numerous alternative, evidence-based methods of enhancing biodiversity and supporting the environment without introducing lynx.

Chief Executive: Phil Stocker
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National Sheep Association is an organisation which represents the views and interests of sheep producers throughout the UK.
NSA is funded by its membership of sheep farmers and its activities involve it in every aspect of the sheep industry.



We are making excellent progress in engaging farmers in building habitat whereas this risks farmers losing faith in this as they could create a habitat which would help a lynx to hide and attack their own livestock. We want to see nature rebuilt but this could be impacted if introducing lynx turns farmers away from the work they are being supported by Government to do in managing habitat restoration.

NSA believes there are far bigger nature priorities than reintroducing a single apex predator that appears very attractive to the general public, but is unlikely to have any significant impact on nature improvement.

The project also promotes tourism as a key benefit, if lynx are as elusive as claimed, we question whether the public will realistically see them – making any tourism benefit minimal at best. In contrast, the potential costs to farmers could be significant, not only financially but also in terms of stress and mental health.

If a licence application is received, which we are fairly sure it will be next year, we urge the Government to ensure that any consultation on such a significant proposal is transparent, inclusive, and genuinely reflective of all stakeholders – particularly those whose livelihoods are at risk. Without such a process, there is a real danger of policy being shaped by incomplete or biased evidence.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you directly to discuss our concerns in more detail and to explore alternative strategies for enhancing biodiversity that protect both our environment and our rural communities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Stocker', with a small dot at the end.

Phil Stocker, Chief Executive, National Sheep Association

Cc Marian Spain, Natural England
Daniel Zeichner