

North Devon Conservatives

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New animal health body is a cover for cost-sharing

Defra has announced proposals for an independent animal health body that would make decisions over the handling of animal diseases.

However, Philip J Milton, Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for North Devon, has supported comments made by Neil Parish MEP, Conservative Chairman of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, that although the introduction of an independent body is welcomed, it must not come with the price tag of cost-sharing with the farming industry.

Its day-to-day operations would be partly funded by a levy on livestock keepers, whilst the costs associated with handling disease outbreaks would be shared between the farming industry and the taxpayer.

Philip echoes the comments noting it was right to bring in first hand practical experience of those in the industry to better handle the response to disease outbreaks, but Defra has "a bit of a cheek" to ask farmers to contribute to disease control given their constant dithering over Bovine TB and the fact that the last major animal disease outbreak in the UK - Foot and Mouth disease - was caused by Government failings.

Philip said:

"The Government is right to call upon independent and experienced advice to prevent and tackle disease outbreaks, but this plan comes with a hefty price tag for the farming industry.

"Is it right that farmers should pay to control disease outbreaks when the last major outbreak of Foot and Mouth

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disease originated in a Government laboratory and the countryside continues to suffer from Defra's dithering over TB?

"Given the misery already dished out to farmers across the country and indeed North Devon as a direct result of this Government's failures, it will be a real kick in the teeth for the Government to now come to them with a bill."

ENDS

Philip J Milton
Prospective Member of Parliament for North Devon



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