**The Country Trust**

**Policy Advisor Nina Bell**, says the Government’s new food strategy does nothing to shift the status quo:

“Henry Dimbleby’s review of the food system makes clear that food is the single most critical issue impacting climate change, children’s health, and the health of our planet.

“Yet with this new food strategy Ministers seem to be expecting children to eat healthily, value food and make informed and sustainable food choices, without allowing them any meaningful exposure to how food is produced.

“If we’re to achieve real change then step one should be allowing children to get out of the classroom and explore where food comes from. Inexplicably it’s too often the case that farmers are expected to remain invisible when it comes to children learning about food.

“We’ve lost our connection to the land that sustains us all. Until we mend that, we won’t change anything, for health or the natural world.

“We believe every child should have the opportunity to visit a real working farm, to discover through first-hand experience where their food comes from.

“Our food strategy should set children up to thrive. This document certainly fails to do that.”

**Humane Society International UK**

**Claire Bass, Executive Director** said: “The National Food Strategy was a critical opportunity to create a more healthy, sustainable and equitable food system, but sadly it appears to fall very far short of that goal. We welcome that it dips a toe in the water of catalysing alternative protein production but it falls massively short in terms of tangible commitments to increase uptake of plant rich foods in schools or other public sector catering. Many major caterers have set targets to be 20-30% plant based by 2025, and the high street is continue its is rapid transition away from damaging meat and dairy. But the government, which spends £2.4 billion every year on food in schools, hospitals, prisons and the like, has essentially ignored the Dimbleby report it commissioned, which recommended a 30% national meat reduction by 2032, and is instead myopically fixating on trying to catch cow burps. Through our Forward Food programme we have been knocking on open doors, helping caterers create change at scale by nudging consumer choices towards an expanded, tasty, healthy range of plant-based choices. This strategy is a massive missed opportunity and leaves it to organisations like ours, retailers and the wider hospitality sector to step up to the plate and hasten the shift to more plant-centric diets that is so urgently needed to protect the health of people, animals and the planet.”

**First Steps Nutrition**

**Director Dr Vicky Sibson said:** This is not the comprehensive strategy we were hoping for. In particular we believe it is misleading to state it is applicable to all, because the food and nutrition needs of babies (aged 0-12 months old) are ignored and those of young children (aged 1-5 years) are barely considered. This is important for babies and young children in their own right, but also vital given the strategy’s aim to reduce obesity rates by half by 2030. More than 14% of children who started school in England in 2020 are already living with obesity, and among those from the most deprived households, the prevalence was 20.3%. Obesity tracks from early childhood into adolescence and adulthood and to reverse it is harder than to prevent it in the first place. Without improving diets in the early years (from pre-conception, through pregnancy, the first year of life and to when children start school), the rising tide of obesity will not be reversed.”