

Michael Gove

Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

June 2017

His past pronouncements and behaviour may not give us a precise picture of what type of Minister Michael Gove will be but it may give us some insight into whether he will support or oppose certain issues. This is a brief precis of his voting record and what he has said on farming, environmental and rural issues.

He has a reputation as a reformer and The Spectator magazine said a proud record of turning the established order upside down.

Parliamentary and ministerial career

- He jointly founded Policy Exchange, which is a think tank focussed on modernisation of ideas and policy.
- His career started as a journalist, which he returned to at least part-time in 2016 when he lost his cabinet seat.
- He became an MP in 2005 in the ultra-safe seat of Surrey Heath, which he still represents, and was on David Cameron's opposition front bench within seven months.
- He was made Education Secretary in the Coalition Government, when he set out on a significant reform of schools, including the creation of "free schools" outside local authority control and more rigorous exams.
- In 2015 he was appointed Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice.
- He has been a long-time critic of the European Union, since at least 2013.
- In 2016, he was seen as one of the leading supporters of leaving the European Union, with Boris Johnson. After the referendum result and resignation of David Cameron as PM, he initially supported Johnson's leadership bid before making his own failed tilt.
- He subsequently lost his cabinet position but remained a vocal member of the Exiting the European Union Committee.

His voting record

He has generally voted against measures to prevent climate change although he originally backed David Cameron's attempt to reposition the Conservative Party as an environmentally-friendly party that would address environmental change. So he can be a political chameleon!

- He was absent for the vote on the Climate Change Bill (2008).
- He voted in favour of establishing the Green Investment Bank (2012) but voted against requiring it to explicitly act in support of the UK's carbon reduction targets (2012).
- He voted against requiring the setting of a target range for the amount of carbon dioxide (or other greenhouse gases) produced per unit of electricity generated (2013).
- He voted to apply the tax on non-domestic electricity supplies (the climate change levy) to electricity generated from renewable sources (2015).
- He voted not to reduce the permitted carbon dioxide emission rate of new homes (2016).
- He tried to remove climate change from the school curriculum when Education Secretary, although he says this was to reduce the size of the curriculum rather than having an issue with the subject or the science.

He voted for selling England's state owned forests (2011)

He voted in favour of badger cull (2013)

What he has said

He has been optimistic about the impact Brexit would have on the farming industry, criticising the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which he felt was holding farmers back.

"There would be no reduction in what people get from the CAP but what we do want to look at is the bureaucracy which leads to delays in payments. So we would want to keep the money and not the bureaucracy. George [Eustice] and I both said throughout the [EU] referendum is we would ensure that all of the money that currently goes to farmers stays with farmers." (July 2016, Yorkshire Post).

"All those who make our countryside beautiful and who keep it productive are at the very heart of policymaking" (11 June 2017, Sky News).



CAP payments would be matched by government, there would be less red tape and that migrant labour would be protected (said in 2016 when in contention to be the leader of the Conservative Party).

That preserving areas of natural beauty was a key environmental pledge.

Brexit could allow Britain to scrap “absurd” rules such as the European commission’s Habitats Directive [as it stopped and increased the cost of some housing development] and the clinical trials directive.

That he is a ‘shy green’.

What others have said about his appointment

“I didn’t think it could get any worse but putting Michael Gove in charge of the environment is like putting the fox in charge of the hen house. It’s bad news.” Ed Davey, energy and climate change secretary at the time Gove was Education Secretary.

What you might not know about him

He plays the ukulele (we don’t know how well) and he passed his driving test on the seventh attempt – so he is determined!

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Contact us

Jason Beedell

Partner, Research

M: 07795 651493

E: jason.beedell@struttandparker.com

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