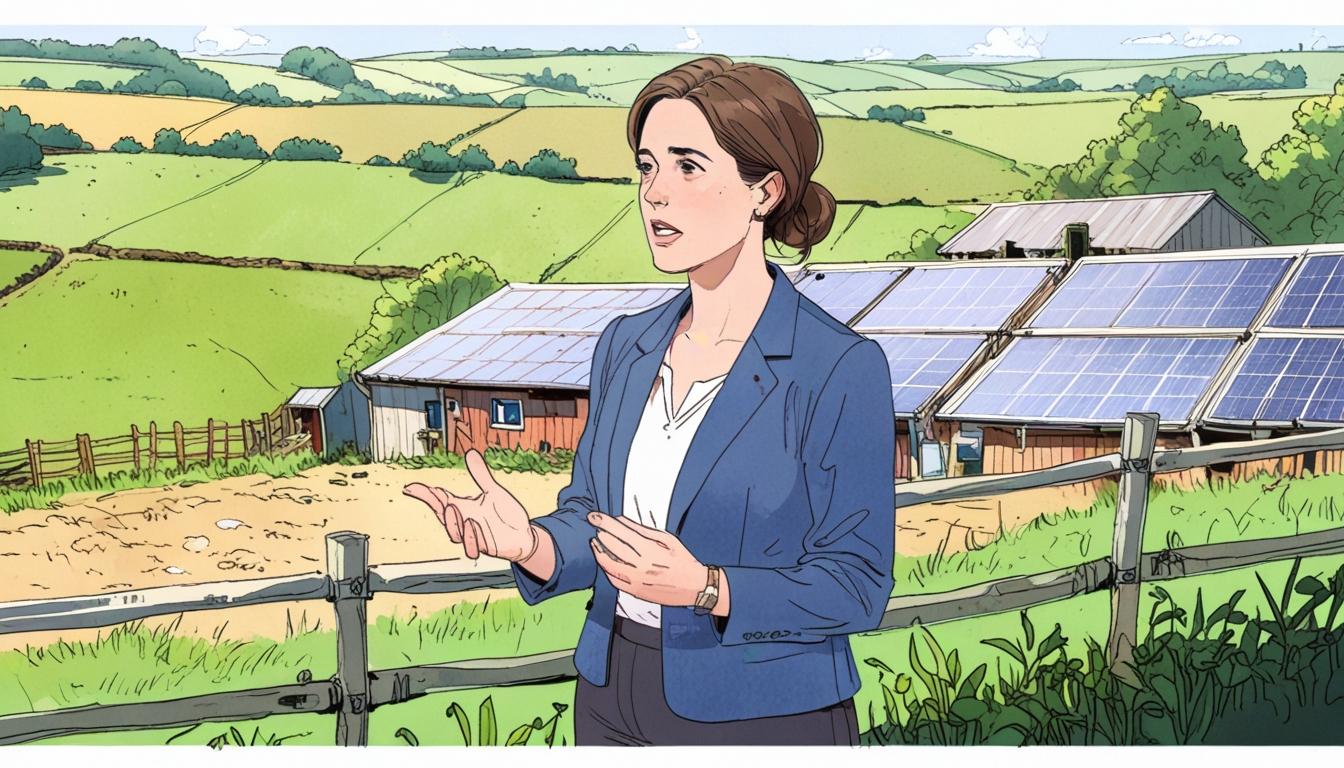
# Victoria Atkins warns Labour’s rural policies risk devastating farming communities



Former barrister and current Shadow Environment Secretary Victoria Atkins has taken centre stage in the discourse surrounding the future of Britain's countryside, expressing profound concerns about government policies that threaten rural communities. With the Labour government now at the helm, she aims to hold it accountable for what she sees as a stark divergence from the realities faced by farming families.

Atkins has observed an "enormous sense of betrayal" among rural communities since Labour's rise to power, primarily attributing this sentiment to recent changes in inheritance tax regulations introduced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves. The upcoming imposition of a 20% inheritance tax on agricultural assets valued over £1 million will prove detrimental, she argues, instilling fear in farmers and their families as they confront challenging conversations about their financial futures.

In an unsettling revelation, Atkins relayed a farmer's chilling statement: “If there was a rope in the corner of this room I would use it," exposing the severe mental health ramifications of the new tax policy. This highlights the immediate distress for older individuals and terminally ill farmers, who now face uncertainty regarding their families' financial burdens.

Critically, Atkins believes Labour’s leadership is increasingly detached from rural issues, with an overreliance on "city MPs" who lack an understanding of agricultural life. The cancellation of the Sustainable Farming Incentive, which previously aided farmers in restoring vital ecosystems, underscores these misguided priorities, she contends.

Moreover, she raised alarms about Energy Secretary Ed Miliband's aggressive pursuit of net zero emissions. Atkins asserts that the deployment of solar panels and wind turbines threatens prestigious agricultural land, jeopardising food security. "Once a field has been plastered in solar panels, there is very little that can be grown on it afterwards," she cautioned, illustrating the precarious balance between energy ambitions and food production.

Atkins’s environmental agenda also extends to addressing the alarming issues surrounding sewage discharge in British rivers and seas, a byproduct of an archaic infrastructure. Drawing from her childhood experiences in Blackpool, she underlines the urgent need to modernise waste management systems to safeguard public health and the environment. "None of us wants to be in this situation... if it was that easy we would have done it, believe you me," she remarked.

With a family legacy rooted in conservation, Atkins positions her party as a defender of the environment, proclaiming, "We are the Conservatives because we believe in conserving that of which we are proud." As she continues to champion rural and environmental causes, Atkins's voice stands out in the evolving narrative of the UK's political landscape, scrutinising a government that appears increasingly disconnected from the needs of its rural constituents.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/rachel-reeves-victoria-atkins-atkins-labour-budget-b1192230.html> - This article discusses Victoria Atkins' criticism of the Labour government's decision to impose a 20% inheritance tax on agricultural assets valued over £1 million, highlighting her concerns about the impact on family farms and rural communities.
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/910322a5-e219-4b6e-9b44-dde346c75a5c> - The Financial Times reports on wealthy landowners accelerating the transfer of property to heirs due to concerns that inheritance tax reliefs could be reduced under a potential Labour government, corroborating Atkins' observations of rural communities feeling betrayed.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/rachel-reeves-victoria-atkins-atkins-labour-budget-b1192230.html> - This article includes a statement from Victoria Atkins expressing concern over the mental health impact of the new inheritance tax policy on farmers, aligning with the article's mention of a farmer's distressing statement.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/oct/30/reeves-accused-of-betraying-small-family-firms-with-inheritance-tax-rises> - The Guardian reports on criticism of Chancellor Rachel Reeves' inheritance tax changes, with the National Farmers' Union labeling the move as 'disastrous,' supporting Atkins' belief that Labour's leadership is detached from rural issues.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/rachel-reeves-victoria-atkins-atkins-labour-budget-b1192230.html> - This article discusses the cancellation of the Sustainable Farming Incentive, which previously aided farmers in restoring vital ecosystems, underscoring Atkins' concerns about misguided priorities.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/rachel-reeves-victoria-atkins-atkins-labour-budget-b1192230.html> - The article includes a statement from Victoria Atkins expressing concern over the impact of renewable energy projects on agricultural land, aligning with the article's mention of her caution about the deployment of solar panels and wind turbines.
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