



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
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14 December 2022

Dear Sir George

Thank you for your email of 3 October to the Rt Hon Ranil Jayawardena MP on behalf of your constituents about environmental protections. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

Nature is in need of our help. We have been clear about the importance of environmental protection across the UK, not least through our world leading Environment Act, which requires a new legally binding target to be set to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030. We are committed to meeting this target and we are developing an extensive policy programme to ensure it is delivered. We have legislated through the Environment Act and will continue to improve our regulations and wildlife laws in line with our ambitious vision.

In March this year, we published the Nature Recovery Green Paper setting out our proposals to reform our system of protections to better support this ambitious work, including the Habitats Regulations. We seek to create a system that better reflects the latest science and impending impacts of climate change, our domestic species and habitats, and helps us to achieve our significant goals to recover nature. The Nature Recovery Green Paper consultation closed in May. We are now in the process of analysing responses and will publish a response as soon as possible, on conclusion of this exercise.

In reviewing retained EU law, Defra's aim is to ensure that environmental law is fit for purpose and able to drive improved environmental outcomes, whilst also ensuring regulators can deliver efficiently. This will ensure the UK regulatory framework is appropriate and tailored to the UK.

As the Prime Minister has set out, protecting our environment is at the heart of the Government's manifesto commitments and we will always back British farmers and our rural communities. We will be working closely with farmers, land managers and environmental groups as we look at ways to improve our future farming policy so that it both strengthens our environment and supports our thriving food and farming sector. We will set out more details later this year. The Secretary of State has met, and will continue to meet over the coming weeks, a range of environmental and farming organisations to hear their views and to emphasise the Government's manifesto commitments.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), sister convention to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is the international body devoted to biodiversity. The UK is committed to securing an ambitious outcome at COP15 to halt and reverse biodiversity loss globally by 2030, and we are playing a leading role in pushing to achieve this ambition.

We will be advocating for ambitious global targets to ensure at least 30% of the global land and of the ocean is protected, ecosystems are restored, species population sizes are recovering, and extinctions are halted by 2050. For instance, in support of the 30 by 30 target, the UK leads the Global Ocean Alliance (GOA) and is the Ocean Co-Chair (alongside France and Costa Rica) of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (HAC). While the GOA champions the 30 by 30 ocean target and ambitious marine outcomes from CBD COP15, the HAC champions a 30 by 30 target for both land and ocean. Building on our G7 and COP26 Presidencies and our co-chairship of these key nature alliances, we will continue to support the Chinese Presidency and high ambition outcomes.

Finally, the Government is considering its approach to Investment Zones. The policy intent to incentivise economic growth and development remains, and the Government is reviewing the Investment Zones policy in line with our Levelling Up agenda.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trudy Harrison', written in a cursive style.

**TRUDY HARRISON MP**