



**Office for
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Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning
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By e-mail only

17 July 2025

Dear Minister of State

Planning and Infrastructure Bill – amendments

Thank you for your letter today. I would like to thank you in turn for the constructive and positive engagement of your officials since I wrote in May with our advice on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

Our advice was that the notable reductions in environmental protection initially proposed could be ameliorated in large part by acting upon the advice we provided. I am pleased now to see the significant steps Government has taken as a consequence.

I previously advised you of the OEP's concerns that Part 3 of the Bill, if passed as initially drafted, would have the effect of reducing the level of environmental protection provided for by existing environmental law. We appreciate, however, that the Bill constitutes a deliberate shift from a site and species-based protective regime and that, with this shift, Government is striking a different balance of risk and opportunity. You have followed our advice in large part, whilst maintaining this approach, and the amendments the Government now proposes substantially allay our concerns.

We are clear that even after the material amendments the Government proposes, the Bill would, in some respects, lower environmental protection on the face of the law. In the round, however, the additional safeguards proposed today make Government's intended "win-win" for nature and the economy a more likely prospect.

I am reassured by Government's confirmation that making, amending and revoking an Environmental Delivery Plan would constitute making policy in respect of applying the Environmental Principles Policy Statement. Robust application of the environmental principles is so important to environmental protection in practice, and I look forward to seeing more about how these vital principles will be woven into the new system as it takes shape.

We expect to continue our scrutiny as the Bill continues its passage and may offer further advice. Should the Bill receive Royal Assent, its intended positive outcome will stand or fall upon effective implementation and upon robust and transparent evaluation. Beyond changes in law, success will require marked change in practice, in resourcing (including technical expertise) and in transparent reporting, not only

within Natural England but also in Local Planning Authorities, the Planning Inspectorate and elsewhere.

You would expect us, I am sure, to continue to watch closely and to scrutinise how this significant change in environmental law is implemented. We are taking an active interest in early work towards establishing the first Environmental Delivery Plans and the Nature Restoration Fund. Throughout, our focus will remain the realisation of positive outcomes for nature.

Please do let me know if we can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely



Dame Glenys Stacey
Chair, Office for Environmental Protection



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cc. Rt. Hon. Steve Reed OBE MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs