



ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FORUM

c/o Society for the Environment
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Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP

Prime Minister

10 Downing Street

LONDON SW1A 2AA

11 October 2022

OPEN LETTER FROM EPF TO PM RE ATTACK ON NATURE

Subject: The Folly of Regressing Nature Protections

Dear Prime Minister

Cc: Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng MP, Environment Secretary Ranil Jayawardena MP, Levelling Up Secretary Simon Clarke MP, Business Secretary Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, and Climate Minister Graham Stuart MP

The Environmental Policy Forum (EPF) is a coalition of 13 professional bodies and learned societies representing around 70,000 environmental professionals across a variety of different disciplines. The views expressed are those of professionals, close to practice, duly qualified, and often working in industry, many running successful businesses. The EPF network strives to promote environmental sustainability and resilience for the public benefit.

We are writing to you to express our deep concerns arising from Government announcements on Friday 23rd September 2022. The [Retained EU Law \(Revocation and Reform\) Bill](#), the proposed Planning and Infrastructure Bill, and the [Growth Plan 2022](#) represent significantly regressive policies on nature protections that are both at odds with the evidence and with the 2019 Conservative Manifesto on which this Government was elected. The notion that the natural environment is a burden on the economy has been thoroughly refuted by the Treasury's own report [The Economics](#)

[of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review](#) published just last year. Those who work in the fields of environmental protection and land use planning have proposed meaningful reforms to existing legislation and guidance, such as the Habitats Directive and Regulations, to expedite much needed development whilst still protecting the environment, but these have been ignored.

With reference to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) currently has responsibility for 570 pieces of EU-derived law which will need to be assessed before the sunset clause deadline if the Bill is approved as drafted. This equates to Defra reviewing roughly one piece of legislation every day between now and the end of 2023 when all EU-derived law would expire. We are particularly concerned about the implications for the Habitats Regulations and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regime, but also the implications for regulatory frameworks in critical areas such as food and occupational health and safety. The UK will also still need to implement international conservation [conventions](#) that we are signatories to, including the Bern, Bonn, Ramsar and Biological Diversity conventions.

Habitats Regulations

With reference to the Habitats Directive, from which the Habitats Regulations are derived, the [Cameron administration's own review published in March 2012](#) stated (paragraphs 27, 28; page 13) that:

"27. It was clear from the wide range of evidence and views submitted in the course of the Review that in the large majority of cases the implementation of the Directives is working well, allowing both development of key infrastructure and ensuring that a high level of environmental protection is maintained.

28. For instance, Natural England receives around 26,500 land use consultations annually; of these, they 'object' to less than 0.5% of these on Habitats Regulations grounds. Most of these objections are successfully dealt with at the planning stage."

Whilst the UK has moved on since 2012, the Habitat Regulations, although updated in 2017, have not meaningfully altered the obligations of developers or those who work within the sphere of influence of the parent Habitat Directive to which the Regulations relate. The 'playing field' upon which all who engage with the law has not changed in a meaningful way since the 2012 Review.

The Habitats Regulations protect the best nature sites in the country and are not some luxury add-on. They should be the cornerstone of the Government's stated aims to reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

Planning and Environmental Impact Assessment

In relation to the Growth Plan and 'Investment Zones', it is unclear how the Government intend for this to work with the Environment Act 2021. Reduced planning need in 'Investment Zones' would appear to be incompatible with Biodiversity Net Gain (see [Part 6, Schedule 14](#) and [Schedule 15](#) of the Environment Act 2021, widely understood in the profession to be published by November 2023).

The [Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations](#) are based on widely understood and practised international principles. Without a clear plan for what replaces the Regulations, and we have seen

nothing as yet, removal of the Regulations would not only be damaging to the natural environment but would also create major uncertainty for business and investment.

Environmental Land Management Schemes

Added to our concerns outlined above are suggestions that this Government is also considering rowing back on Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS). ELMS offered one of the very few benefits of Brexit in that we could redesign our farming support system outside the Common Agricultural Policy. There is consensus from environmental groups, land managers and farmers that paying farmers and land managers for the public goods and services that they provide through environmentally friendly farming practices should be welcomed and supported as part of the solution to the interlinked climate, biodiversity, and food supply crises. It would absolutely be a backward step to return to a system of basic payments for simply owning land.

Yours Sincerely and signed on behalf of the following organisations,

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Society



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Notes:

1. The British Ecological Society (BES) is the oldest ecological society in the world. They were established in 1913 and have been fostering the science of ecology ever since. They have 6,000 members around the world and bring people together across regional, national and global scales to advance ecological science. britishecologicalsociety.org
2. The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) is the leading professional membership body representing and supporting around 7,000 ecologists and environmental managers in the UK, Ireland and abroad. Our Vision is of a society which values the natural environment and recognises the contribution of professional ecologists and environmental managers to its conservation. cieem.net
3. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) is the membership and awarding body for the environmental health sector. Our members work around the world, improving lives and demonstrating excellence across all areas of environmental health including food, public health, housing, environmental protection, and health and safety. cieh.org
4. The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM), is the leading independent Chartered professional body for water and environment professionals, promoting excellence within the sector. ciwem.org
5. The Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM) is the leading professional body for the resource and waste management sector representing over 5,500 individuals in the UK, Ireland and overseas. Established in 1898, CIWM is a non-profit making organisation, dedicated to the promotion of professional competence amongst waste managers. CIWM seeks to raise standards for those working in and with the sector by producing best practice guidance, developing educational and training initiatives, and providing information on key waste-related issues. It uses the body of knowledge represented by its membership to inform and influence policy and regulation on resources and waste management to increase resource efficiency and productivity and promote sustainable development. ciwm.co.uk
6. The Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES) is a membership organisation that represents professionals from fields as diverse as air quality, land contamination and education - wherever you find environmental work underpinned by science. A visionary organisation

leading debate, dissemination and promotion of environmental science and sustainability, the IES promotes an evidence-based approach to decision and policy making. the-ies.org

7. The Institute of Fisheries Management (IFM) is an international organisation of people sharing a common interest in the modern management of recreational and commercial fisheries. ifm.org.uk
8. The Landscape Institute (LI) is the chartered body for the landscape profession. It is an educational charity working to promote the art and science of landscape practice. The LI's aim, through the work of its members, is to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment for the public benefit. The Landscape Institute provides a professional home for all landscape practitioners including landscape scientists, landscape planners, landscape architects, landscape managers and urban designers. landscapeinstitute.org
9. The Society for the Environment (SocEnv) is comprised of 24 Licenced Bodies, with over 500,000 members between them. It received a Royal Charter in 2004, which empowers it to regulate the Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) and Registered Environmental Technician (REnvTech) professional registrations globally. There are now over 7,500 environmental professionals currently registered who share a common vision of delivering sustainability through environmental professionalism. socenv.org.uk