

Jane Hunt MP



House of Commons

14 May 2020

Dear local residents,

Thank you to those who have contacted me about the *Environment Bill*.

The [Environment Bill](#) will place environmental ambition and accountability at the heart of Government. I am pleased that legislative measures will be introduced to address the biggest environmental priorities of our age, ensuring we can deliver on the commitment to leave the natural world in a better condition than we found it.

The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) will have the power to take public bodies to an upper tribunal if there are breaches of the law. It is important that the OEP is independent and fully transparent in order to effectively hold the Government to account on its targets, and Ministers have given assurances that it will be operationally independent, including from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This means that Ministers will not be able to set its programme of activity or influence its decision-making.

The Bill will also give the Secretary of State the power to set long-term, legally binding environmental targets on air quality, water, biodiversity, and resource efficiency and waste reduction that will be reviewed every five years. An environmental improvement plan will be published which will be reviewed every five years, and a progress report will be published annually. I welcome the fact that the OEP will hold this, and every future Government, to account on these targets, and will report on the progress made to improve the natural environment.

If the Secretary of State wanted to lower or change a target, they would have to lay it before Parliament and publish a statement as to why they had reached their decision. It would then be up to Members of Parliament to scrutinise this decision before voting on a Statutory Instrument to change any necessary legislation.

The Government is currently reflecting on concerns about the Bill raised during Committee Stage, as well as those raised by colleagues and interested parties. I look forward to the Bill coming back to the House, at which point I will have the opportunity to vote on any amendments brought forward.

With regards to residents' specific concerns about plastics, the [Resources and Waste Strategy](#) sets out the Government's plans to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste throughout the lifetime of the 25 Year Environment Plan. The Government will also work towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable, or

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA 020 7219 7224
Constituency Office: 18, Pinfold Gate, Loughborough, LE11 1BE 01509 262723
Email: jane.hunt.mp@parliament.uk
www.janehunt.uk

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compostable by 2025. In 2019, consultations ran on a number of key policy measures set out in the strategy: [reforming existing packaging waste regulations](#); [exploring the introduction of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers](#); and [increasing consistency in the recycling system](#). I am pleased that the *Environment Bill* includes powers to enable Government to deliver these measures.

The *Environment Bill* also gives the Secretary of State the power to amend two pieces of legislation regulating the use of chemicals in the UK. This will allow the Secretary of State to take further steps where necessary to ensure a smooth transition to a UK chemicals regime following the UK's exit from the EU. I am encouraged that the Bill makes it possible to keep the legislation up to date and respond to emerging needs or ambitions for the effective management of chemicals.

I hope that this information is helpful. Please do let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane".

Jane Hunt MP