

Jane Hunt MP



House of Commons

4 February 2021

Dear local resident,

Thank you for your recent email regarding the [Environment Bill](#).

You may be aware that the Government has decided that the Bill should be carried over to the next parliamentary session due to the COVID-19 pandemic applying extra pressures on the Parliamentary timetable. It is right that we make sure there is enough time available for proper scrutiny of this incredibly important piece of legislation and I would like to assure you that this decision does not diminish the Government's plans to create the most ambitious environmental programme of any country. Indeed, key work on implementing the Bill's measures will continue at pace, with the Report Stage recommencing early in the Second Session and Royal Assent expected in the Autumn. I will continue to follow this matter closely.

I know a number of local residents have shared specific comments and concerns about the Bill and I would like to take this opportunity to respond to these in turn.

### **Nature Recovery**

I recognise that our rich biodiversity and ecosystems around the world are under threat and, while it is encouraging that seventy-five world leaders registered their support for the ambitious Leader's Pledge for Nature to put nature and biodiversity on the road to recovery by 2030, we must now turn those words into meaningful action. I am, therefore, pleased that Ministers are launching the [Nature Recovery Network Delivery Partnership](#) to help deliver the biggest nature recovery project in England's history, which will restore our depleted ecosystems and habitats as we continue to build back greener.

Ministers are also committed to playing a leading role in developing an ambitious and transformative post-2020 framework for global biodiversity under the convention on biological diversity. Following agreement of this framework, Ministers have said that they will publish a new strategy for nature in England which will outline how they will implement the convention on biological diversity's new global targets domestically and meet the [25-year environmental goals](#) for nature at the same time.

Indeed, I recognise the importance of setting legally binding targets to support these ambitions, so I am pleased that the *Environment Bill* includes a requirement to set at least one long-term, legally binding target in relation to biodiversity, as well as targets for air quality, water and resource efficiency, and waste reduction. The Government will determine



the specific areas in which targets will be set using the robust and transparent target-setting, monitoring and reporting process that the Bill legislates for, and will seek advice from independent experts. I am pleased that both Parliament and the public will have the opportunity to provide input to the development of these targets and, as I will set out later on, I am particularly keen to be involved in the discussion on air quality targets.

Finally, I am pleased that connecting more people from all backgrounds with the natural environment for their health and wellbeing is a key part of the [25-Year Environment Plan](#) and I understand the long-term targets made under the *Environment Bill* can be set out for any aspects of the natural environment or people's enjoyment of it.

### **Deforestation**

As you may be aware, a [new report](#) has now been published which sets out the Government's approach to tackling deforestation linked to UK demand for products such as cocoa, rubber, soya, and palm oil. Combined, the [new package of measures](#) set out in the report will ensure that greater resilience, traceability and sustainability are built into the UK's supply chains by working in partnership with other countries and supporting farmers to transition to more sustainable food and land use systems. The measures include the introduction of a new law in the *Environment Bill* which will require greater due diligence from businesses, and make it illegal for UK businesses to use key commodities if they have not been produced in line with local laws protecting forests and other natural ecosystems.

Operational details of the proposal will be implemented through secondary legislation, which will be subject to further consultation. This will consider which commodities will be prescribed, the thresholds that determine which businesses will be subject to the requirements, the precise information businesses will be required to report on and the level of fines.

### **Pesticides**

The Government continues to support the restrictions on neonicotinoids to protect pollinators, and emergency authorisations for pesticides are only granted in exceptional circumstances where diseases or pests cannot be controlled by any other reasonable means. These emergency authorisations can provide short term availability of a product if the applicant can demonstrate that: this addresses a danger which cannot be contained by any other reasonable means; the use will be limited and controlled; and the necessary protection of people and of the environment can be achieved.

Indeed, it is right that protecting pollinators remains a priority for the Government and I fully support the [National Pollinator Strategy](#), published in 2014, which sets out how the Government, conservation groups, farmers, beekeepers and researchers can work together

Jane Hunt MP



House of Commons

to improve the status of the approximately 1,500 pollinating insect species in England. I will continue to follow this matter closely.

### **Animal testing**

I am pleased that the UK has been at the forefront of opposing animal tests where alternative approaches could be used. This is known as the "last-resort principle", which we will retain and enshrine in legislation through the *Environment Bill*. I am pleased that Ministers are determined that there should be no need for any additional animal testing for a chemical which has already been registered, unless it is subject to further evaluation which shows the registration dossier is inadequate or there are still concerns about the hazards and risks of the chemical, especially to human health.

As the UK has left the EU, EU REACH regulations have been brought into UK law, and I have been assured that the Government continues to seek high standards of protection for the environment and human health in the new UK REACH regime. I am also pleased that the *Environment Bill* already includes safeguards to protect the fundamental principles of REACH, which is why the proposed amendment on this was not necessary.

### **Plastic**

It is concerning that, without urgent action to cut demand, it is estimated that 34 billion tonnes of plastic will have been manufactured globally by 2050. I am, therefore, fully supportive of the significant action the Government is taking to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste, which is set out in its [Resources and Waste Strategy](#) and [25 Year Environment Plan](#).

For example, the Government will be working towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable, or compostable by 2025. In 2019, consultations also ran on a number of key policy measures set out in the strategy, including: reforming existing packaging waste regulations; exploring the introduction of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers; and increasing consistency in the recycling system. The *Environment Bill* includes powers to enable Government to deliver these measures.

### **Air pollution**

As you may be aware, the *Environment Bill* builds on the Government's [Clean Air Strategy](#) - which aims to cut air pollution - by driving forward significant environmental improvements and tackling pollution through long-term targets in key areas. In particular, I am pleased that the Bill introduces a duty on the Government to set at least two air quality targets by October 2022: a target to reduce the annual average level of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in ambient air and a target to improve air quality.

Jane Hunt MP



House of Commons

Ministers have informed me that they are developing a clear evidence-based process for introducing these targets, which will involve thorough analysis and independent expert advice, considering economic, social and technological factors. It will also involve detailed analysis to assess what additional action would be needed to achieve potential targets.

I have already made clear my concerns about levels of PM2.5, especially in the context of the new Biffa/Covanta Energy from Waste incinerator in Shepshed, which I have been [lobbying](#) against, and so I have been and will continue to press for an ambitious target to be introduced. If you would like to be kept up to date on my work on incinerators, please do let me know so I can send you updates.

I hope that this information is helpful. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

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

Jane Hunt MP