



# Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

**Baroness Taylor of Stevenage**  
*Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Housing and Local Government*  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Our reference: MC2025/23178

Cllr Bethia Thomas  
Leader  
Vale of White Horse District Council

3 September 2025

Dear Cllr Bethia,

Thank you for your letter of 15 August regarding the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. I understand that you are particularly concerned about Part 3 of the Bill, and environmental protections. I have been asked to reply, and I hope the below information helps to ease your concerns.

The reforms in this Bill are critical to meeting our ambitious targets of building 1.5 million safe and decent homes and fast-tracking 150 planning decisions on major economic infrastructure projects by the end of this Parliament. However, we have been consistently clear that meeting those objectives need not, and should not, come at the cost of the environment; the nature restoration fund is not simply about streamlining how environmental obligations are discharged but about using funds more effectively to secure better outcomes for the environment.

The status quo is not working for nature, nor for development. Piecemeal, project by project mitigation falls short of the potential that taking a more strategic approach offers. We have always been clear that these reforms do things differently, but we are embracing greater flexibilities to allow Natural England to take forward whichever conservation measures can have the greatest environmental impact, not just those that are capable of fitting the rigid requirements of the current system.

The Bill contains numerous robust safeguards, including in terms of consultation, monitoring and reporting. Ultimately, an Environmental Delivery Plan will only be approved where the Secretary of State is satisfied that it will be better for the environment than the status quo. If later this does not prove to be the case, then the Secretary of State is under a clear duty to revoke it and implement whatever measures they consider necessary to outweigh any development impacts.

Following the introduction of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, we have taken very seriously the concerns expressed by those who are not yet convinced that the provisions in Part 3 provide the necessary certainty that the Nature Restoration Fund will deliver in practice the potential environmental benefits it offers and who question whether the safeguards in the Bill are sufficiently robust.

With a view to ensuring that everyone has confidence that the Nature Restoration Fund delivers the improved outcomes for nature that are at the core of the model, we have continued to engage with expert stakeholders, including environmental organisations and housebuilders, as well as the Office for Environmental Protection.

Having done so, the Government has developed a comprehensive set of amendments for consideration during the Lords Committee Stage of the Bill. As part of that exercise, we have also taken the opportunity to address wider issues raised by stakeholders and during parliamentary debates, as to how the Nature Restoration Fund will operate going forward.

We have engaged with the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) and environmental organisations on these amendments, with the OEP writing to the government to welcome the changes. The government will continue engaging with stakeholders as the Bill progresses through Parliament and as we move into implementation.

Taken together, we are hoping that this provides reassurance that the Nature Restoration Fund will not just ensure that housebuilders benefit from a more streamlined process to discharge their environmental obligations and get Britain building, but deliver a lasting legacy of environmental improvement.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,

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

**BARONESS TAYLOR OF STEVENAGE**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government