

Rt Hon Angela Rayner, Deputy Prime Minister
Rt Hon Steve Reed, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Matthew Pennycook, Minister of State for Housing and Planning
Mary Creagh, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Nature

13th June 2025

Subject: An Open Letter – A plea for transparency and engagement

Dear Deputy Prime Minister, Secretary of State and Ministers,

As the Planning and Infrastructure Bill progresses now to the House of Lords, Part III relating to development and nature recovery regrettably remains mired in controversy. Disappointingly, the lack of transparency and genuine consultation with all key stakeholders before the Bill was drafted has resulted in proposals that not only do not deliver the ‘win-win’ that the Government aspires to but could result in irreparable harm to the natural environment and more confusion, delays and costs for developers. These are clearly not the outcomes you want.

We therefore welcome the commitment from the Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to reflect and to consider further amendments, as stated in the House of Commons earlier this week. However, if such discussions are in train, I write with a plea for genuine stakeholder engagement. The expertise of professional ecologists engaged in the development planning process can be critical to speedy, cost-effective, pragmatic and well-designed outcomes that genuinely benefit nature and developers. We have been at a loss as to why you have not wanted to benefit from that expertise and our strong desire to see an improved development planning process that delivers for developers and for nature.

We genuinely want to help resolve the issues and tensions that have arisen and, above all, we need faith that the Government is committed to transparency and legal rigour on matters of such significant national importance as what is effectively the wholesale reform of our nature laws.

Bearing these points in mind, I make the following requests to you:

1. include us, as professional environmental practitioners and stakeholders working directly with developers and planners, in your consideration of possible amendments. We have a unique perspective and a vested interest in getting this right.

2. once drafted, publish any proposed amendments for public and legal scrutiny and constructive comment;
3. ensure that any proposed amendments are accompanied from the outset by:
 - a. a legal opinion from the Office of Environmental Protection, so that if the Bill remains regressive, there is legal transparency as required under Section 20 Environment Act 2021;
 - b. a reasoned assessment of the impact any proposed amendments would have on the environment, the economy and the various stakeholders affected by these changes in the law

In summary, we believe that engagement with all relevant stakeholders, meaningful collaboration, legal rigour and genuine transparency is the only way to ensure that Part III of the Bill does deliver that 'win-win' that we all want to see.

Yours sincerely



Penny Lewns CEcol CEnv MCIEEM
President