

Rt Hon Dame Angela Eagle
Secretary of State
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Secretary of State,

On behalf of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Given your recent experience as Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs, you return to Defra with a strong grasp of the brief, and we look forward to working with you and your ministerial team.

CIEEM is the professional body for more than 10,000 ecologists and environmental managers working across the UK and Ireland. Most of our members are employed in the private and public sectors, directly supporting house builders, infrastructure developers and planning authorities to assess and mitigate the ecological impacts of development, and to enhance the benefits and opportunities for nature recovery. If consulted early, they are key enablers of speedy, cost-effective, pragmatic and well-designed outcomes that ensure the places we build serve nature and the communities that will live and work in them.

Our members also support land managers and farmers. They help turn low-yield or marginal land into a biodiverse long-term income stream, by creating and managing the habitat banks that generate the BNG units developers buy when they can't achieve enough gain on their own site. Farmers consult ecologists to create registered habitat banks, diversifying their income and boosting nature-based solutions, such as flood resilience, whilst unlocking more off-site options for nearby developers to meet BNG requirements. Our members are also engaged in biodiversity enhancement within the water sector and advise on strategic land use such as nature enhancement in farm clusters.

Earlier this year we were pleased to see Defra's recognition, in its consultation response on Biodiversity Net Gain for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, of the importance of biodiversity metric calculations being carried out by qualified ecologists, and we particularly welcome the commitment to require applicants to confirm how qualified ecologists have contributed to the biodiversity gain plan, the metric calculation, and habitat management and monitoring proposals. As this policy moves into implementation, our members bring the technical knowledge and on-the-ground experience needed to ensure BNG for NSIPs is rigorous and proportionate, accelerating delivery rather than creating unnecessary barriers.

We also see an important role for ecological expertise on Defra's Infrastructure Board. Ecologists are a vital partner in enabling the government's ambition to deliver on both development and nature recovery, identifying how to harness the natural environment to enable development that is resilient and durable. Ensuring decision-makers have access to

environmental expertise when navigating major infrastructure decisions will be central to getting this right.

With real-world experience of the challenges that arise in the planning process, and workable solutions to address them, we would welcome the opportunity to support Defra on the implementation of BNG for NSIPs, planning reforms and to discuss ecologist representation on the Infrastructure Board.

CIEEM is ready to support your department, and we would welcome the opportunity to meet at your earliest convenience to discuss how we can work together towards our shared objectives.

Please do not hesitate to contact us to arrange a suitable time.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Hayns CEcol FCIEEM Chief Executive Officer