



30th September 2022

Dear Sir,

The last few months have been a deeply concerning time for many people with the sharply rising cost of living, soaring energy prices and mortgage rates going through the roof. Wages and benefits fail to keep pace with inflation, families are resorting to foodbanks in ever increasing numbers and many people are simply scared about what the future will bring.

Against this backdrop, it may seem indulgent to talk about anything else, but, at the same time as we are suffering these challenges to our basic way of life, significant changes are being proposed by the Government which threaten serious harm to the environment and the future of our beautiful county. We would not be bringing these issues to your attention, especially in the current climate, if we did not care passionately about nature and our environment and feel deeply concerned about our farms, rivers, woodlands, heaths and beaches, and all the wildlife that lives in them.

We are writing to ask for your help in three areas where the most vital protections we have against pollution, degradation of the environment and the loss of our county's precious and diminishing wildlife have suddenly come under threat:

1. Successive governments have legislated to protect our environment and wildlife. Many of these laws stem from the EU and, post Brexit, the Government wants to revise these laws and improve them. But instead of introducing further protections against eroded habitats and depleted biodiversity, the **Retained EU Law Bill** seems intent on scrapping many of the regulations that currently protect the environment. This ill-conceived legislation seeks to water down or scrap essential environmental protections that have supported these areas for decades. Please help us to block or reform this legislation before it has a chance to destroy our world-famous countryside.
2. The planned new **Investment Zones** offer jobs and affordable homes and we welcome these for Dorset residents who desperately need them. But the Zones unnecessarily sweep away planning and environmental controls that are designed to protect our countryside and wildlife. These regulations, which Developers dislike, are there to protect our countryside from short-term exploitation and erosion of valuable habitats. Please keep the controls that protect Dorset's precious natural environment and continue to enforce them in the new Investment Zones.
3. We applaud the Government's ground-breaking **Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS)** which is designed to replace the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. ELMS rewards landowners and farmers for the vital environmental work they do and this ground-breaking scheme, many years in the making, is currently being trialled and is largely supported by Dorset's farmers. Despite Defra's assurances this week that the scheme will not be scrapped, the current review of ELMS increases uncertainty, threatens to water down the scheme and delays a vital part of our country's plans to regenerate wildlife and the countryside. Please help to keep the ELMS scheme intact and move ahead fast to regenerate our countryside.

These are not political issues but practical and moral ones: farmers, environmentalists and politicians on all sides widely support the principle that the environment needs our urgent protection and that we need to do much more to protect our planet for the future. We have an important leadership role in the world in maintaining high environmental standards. But how can we influence global issues – like the destruction of the Amazon rainforest or the melting of the Antarctic ice sheet – if we do not put our own house in order first?

Please, we urge you to call on Government ministers and fellow MPs to **be more conservative and constructive** in their approach to the environment and to keep essential controls and reforms that stand between us and reckless erosion of wildlife habitats and destruction of wildlife. Dorset may be a small county but what is being proposed has the potential to do untold damage that will last for generations. Please honour your promise to protect the county that we all love.

Yours sincerely,

Dorset Climate Action Network

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