



February 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the progress of the Environment Bill.

I remain fully committed to the Environment Bill as a key part of delivering on our manifesto and creating the most ambitious environmental programme of any country on Earth.

I would like to assure you that carrying over the Bill to the next session does not diminish the ambition for our environment in any way, with Report Stage recommencing early in the Second Session and Royal Assent expected in the Autumn. Key work on implementing the Bill's measures will continue at pace, including establishing the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), setting long-term legally-binding targets for environmental protection and creating a new Deposit Return Scheme for drink containers.

The Environment Bill will place environmental ambition and accountability at the heart of Government. I am pleased that legislative measures will be introduced to address the biggest environmental priorities of our age, ensuring we can deliver on the commitment to leave the natural world in a better condition than we found it. These will include meeting net-zero by 2050, as well as wider long-term legally binding targets on biodiversity, air quality, water, and resource and waste efficiency which will be established under the Bill.

The OEP is now expected to commence shortly after Royal Assent. The OEP will have the power to take public bodies to an upper tribunal if there are breaches of the law. I believe it is important that the OEP is independent and fully transparent in order to effectively hold the Government to account on its targets. The OEP will be operationally independent from Government, including from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This means that Ministers will not be able to set its programme of activity or influence its decision-making.

The UK is 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 will publish a new strategy for nature in England that 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.

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. I know that 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.

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, which is the Government's first environmental improvement



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plan. Under the Bill, long-term targets can be set out for any aspects of the natural environment or people's enjoyment of it.

The Resources and Waste Strategy sets out Government plans to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste throughout the lifetime of the 25 Year Environment Plan, however for the most problematic plastics the Government will go faster, working towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable, or compostable by 2025. In 2019, consultations ran on a number of key policy measures set out in the strategy: reforming existing packaging waste regulations; exploring the introduction of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers; increasing consistency in the recycling system; the Environment Bill includes powers to enable Government to deliver these measures.

The Environment Bill also gives the Secretary of State the power to amend two pieces of legislation regulating the use of chemicals in the UK. This will allow the Secretary of State to take further steps where necessary to ensure a smooth transition to a UK chemicals regime following the UK's exit from the EU. I am encouraged that the Bill makes it possible to keep the legislation up to date and respond to emerging needs or ambitions for the effective management of chemicals.

Outside the EU Britain can develop global gold standard environmental policies. Having left the Common Agricultural Policy, we can use public money for public goods, rewarding environmentally responsible land use, and leaving the Common Fisheries Policy means we are able to grant access and allocate quotas based on sustainability, allowing us to pursue the highest standards in marine conservation.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY