



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

27th August 2021

Jean Contrevent,

RE: PROTECTION OF HEDGEHOGS

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns regarding the protection of hedgehogs, with specific reference to a petition by the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS). I have read your comments on this with great interest.

I appreciate you making me aware of this campaign - however, unfortunately, owing to other parliamentary commitments on the day I was unable to attend this particular debate.

The hedgehog is an extraordinary creature with a long and celebrated history in this country. I am pleased that these creatures are currently protected by the *Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981* from being killed using prohibited methods, such as crossbows, traps and snares.

It is welcome that the *Environment Bill* contains measures that will help improve the status of threatened species, which includes a requirement to set at least one long-term, legally binding target in relation to biodiversity, as well as strengthening the duty on public authorities to take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Ministers are also acting, through net gain provisions in the Bill, to support the role of new development in helping protect and create the habitat that our native species, including hedgehogs, need to thrive. Furthermore, the Government has amended the Bill in the House of Lords to require a historic, new legally binding target on species abundance for 2030, with the aim of halting the decline of nature in England.

I also very much welcome the measured approach to environmental reform that the Secretary of State will take. Ministers will consult with the new Office for Environmental Protection, and work with conservation groups on any proposals they develop before any regulatory changes are made. In addition, later this year, a Green Paper will be brought forward setting out plans to deliver a regulatory framework that is fit for purpose, including the objective of protecting 30 percent of terrestrial land by 2030. I know that we need a revised approach to deliver this new species abundance target and better support iconic and much-loved native species like the hedgehog.

The Government also continues to work on determining the specific actions that will reward farmers and land managers under the new environmental land management schemes. These schemes, including the Sustainable Farming Incentive, will help to create and preserve woodlands, heathlands, species-rich grassland and a range of habitats that will benefit hedgehogs.



I understand that schedule 5 of the *Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981* focuses on deliberate harm against species. Although I agree with the sentiment behind the proposal to add hedgehogs to the schedule to ensure their protection, it is not clear that the species is being threatened in that way. Therefore, the protection under the Act would not currently address the main challenges that the species faces.

The data-gathering phase of this year's review of schedules 5 and 8 of the *Wildlife & Countryside Act* has now finished and through this process non-governmental organisations were able to propose additional endangered species for inclusion on the schedules, propose species for removal from the schedules, and/or propose a change in protection status of a species on the schedules. It is worth noting that any proposal submitted must have included evidence that an endangered species would actually benefit from the additional protection and increase its chances of survival. Once the data gathered has been analysed, interested organisations and individuals will be invited to comment on proposed amendments through a formal consultation phase in the autumn. Following this phase, recommendations will be provided to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and the devolved administrations in Great Britain for changes to the schedules and I understand that the Secretary of State will consider these recommendations, before laying this advice before Parliament.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE