



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

10th November 2022

Dear Constance,

RE: PROTECTING NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the Government's commitments to protecting nature and the environment; I have read your comments on this issue with interest.

I would like to assure you that claims that the Government is rowing back on commitments to our farming reforms or nature are wholly untrue.

Now that we are outside of the European Union, the UK is free from the Common Agricultural Policy, which did little to deliver for farmers, farming, or the environment. The Government was elected on a manifesto which pledged to maintain the budget for farming, but spend it in a way that does better for farming and nature.

My ministerial colleagues and I want to support the choices that individual farmers make for their farms, boost food production and agricultural productivity. This will bolster the rural economy and support communities across the country. Ministers are rolling out new schemes which will support farmers to both produce high-quality food and enhance the natural environment. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is committed to these schemes and is looking at how best to deliver them. I look forward to reading more about these schemes later this year.

Further, the *Environment Act 2021* includes a commitment to halt the decline of nature by 2030. This Government will never undermine its commitments to the environment. Any reforms will rightly contribute to growing our economy in equal step with successfully meeting our commitments in the '25 Year Environment Plan' and the legally binding environmental targets through the Act.

Internationally, the UK has committed to protect 30 percent of its land and ocean by 2030, through the 'Leaders Pledge for Nature', which committed to putting nature and biodiversity globally on a road to recovery by 2030.

Regarding the *Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill*, the Government announced plans earlier this year to create a more innovative regulatory regime. I am assured that this Bill will not weaken environmental protections and the Government has acted to increase protections, such as through the *Environment Act 2021*, which sets in law a series of environmental targets, enforced by a new Office for Environmental Protection.

On fracking, in the November 2019 manifesto, the Government confirmed a moratorium on shale gas exploration in England - with immediate effect. Having listened to local communities and assessed the state of the science, Ministers ruled out changes to the planning system. As set out in the manifesto, the Government will not support shale gas extraction, unless the science shows categorically that it can be done safely.

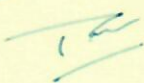
In line with the British Geological Survey report on the scientific advances in hydraulic fracturing since 2019, forecasting the occurrence of large earthquakes and their expected magnitude owing to shale gas extraction remains a challenge with significant uncertainty.



Fracking will only be supported if it can be carried out in a way that is sustainable and protects local communities. This will be led by the evidence on whether this form of exploration can be done in a way which acceptably manages the risk to local communities.

Finally, I broadly support the ambition of driving growth and building new homes and commercial developments. I was assured that the Government was consistently clear that key planning policies which ensure developments protect our precious natural heritage and maintain national policy on Green Belt, would continue to apply. I understand that following the change in Government leadership, the Levelling Up Secretary, the Rt. Hon Michael Gove MP, is reviewing Investment Zones. The Secretary of State has reiterated the Government's steadfast commitment to protecting, and where possible enhancing, the environment and has been absolutely clear that under no circumstances will environmental protections be weakened.

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**