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Rt Hon George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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Your ref: MMilne
Our ref: MC2018/23961

17th November 2018

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of 9 November to the Secretary of State on behalf of your constituent about the Environment Bill. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The Government has made clear on a number of occasions that we will not weaken environmental protection when we leave the EU, but will instead be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than that in which we inherited it.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (25 YEP) sets out how, over a generation, we will replenish depleted soils, rid seas and rivers of the rubbish affecting our planet, cut greenhouse gas emissions, cleanse our air of toxic pollutants, and develop cleaner, more sustainable energy sources. We will also manage pressures on the environment, by mitigating and adapting to climate change, minimising waste, managing our exposure to chemicals and enhancing biosecurity.

On 18 July the Prime Minister announced that the Government will bring forward the first Environment Bill in over 20 years. This builds on the vision set out in the 25 YEP to ensure the environment can be cleaner and greener for future generations.

The Environment Bill will establish a new, independent statutory environment body to hold government to account on environmental standards once we leave the EU and a statutory statement of environmental principles to guide future Government policy making. Draft legislation on environmental principles and governance is due to be published in the autumn, and we are currently developing the wider content of the Bill, including exploring possible wider legislative measures to deliver commitments in the 25 YEP.

We also committed to creating or restoring 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat as part of a Nature Recovery Network, and since 2010 over 11 million trees have been planted with a further 11 million trees due to be planted. We will also develop a new strategy for nature which will help us protect our most important wildlife sites and species. The 25 Year Environment Plan reaffirms our commitment to expanding and connecting wildlife habitats and will drive how we deliver action for pollinators in the future.

Internationally, we are calling for a third of the world's oceans to be protected by 2030 which would treble the current global target. As outlined in the 25 Year Environment Plan, this Government is committed to a new, legally-binding agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, to include Area-Based Management Tools and Marine Protected Areas. We are supporting this through our Blue Belt programme which will protect 4 million km² of ocean around the Overseas Territories by 2020, further conserving vital habitats and species.

Yours sincerely,

Therese

DR THERESE COFFEY MP