## #DefendNature - Suggested text to share with campaigners for follow up emails to MPs

Dear [MP name],

Thanks for your reply to my email raising concerns about the UK Government’s attack on nature. I am glad to hear that you share my desire to protect the natural environment and want to see Government doing its part to protect habitats and species in [XXX constituency here] and across the country.

However, your email still leaves a number of questions unanswered and has not reassured me that nature is in safe hands. Defra have offered little reassurance that the changes the UK Government have announced will not seriously threaten our environmental protections. A lack of clarity about next steps for schemes to support farmers, coupled with a continued insistence on deregulation, means more questions have been raised than answered. Could you ask the Secretary of State and Defra for clarification on the following:

**“We are not scrapping ELMS”**

This is good to know. After years of work, public money, and planning, abandoning the schemes at this stage would be outrageous. But for farmers, land managers and members of the public to feel reassured, we need to urgently hear from the Government that area-based payments are not back on the table, and that they will not reduce the scope or ambition of ELMS. There are also a plethora of other questions that need to be answered urgently, to give confidence that we will not see a scheme come forward that keeps the ELMs name but entirely changes the content.

For example, will the reach of the schemes be significantly curtailed?

* Will the budget set aside for delivering ELMS be protected, or will funding be reduced?
* Will the principles and objectives of the schemes shift, and will other payment options be introduced alongside?
* Will the Government introduce schemes this year to restore hedgerows and support Integrated Pest Management, as has previously been promised, helping to improve resilience to pests and disease, support productivity, and reduce pesticide use?
* Will the Government be rolling out Local Nature Recovery Schemes as planned to allow farmers to do more for nature, climate, and water quality?

There are no obvious answers to any of these questions in any of the communications from UK Government so far.

**ELM – landcsape recovery**

I am particularly concerned about what will happen with the Landscape Recovery part of ELMS. This part of the scheme will be key to tackling both the nature and climate crises, and the first successful projects were only recently announced at the start of September. Now the latest announcements have left a shroud of uncertainty about what will happen with this scheme – both with the projects that were only recently announced, and future projects that would benefit from future funding rounds. If the Government wants to have any hope of delivering on its legally binding Environment Act targets and deliver species recovery by 2030, ambitious funding for the Landscape Recovery scheme must be a part of the picture.

Can you guarantee that the Government will commit to properly funding the Landscape Recovery part of ELMS, alongside the SFI and LNR schemes?

**“We will not be weakening environmental protections”**

It is hard to see how this will be the case. The Retained EU Law (REUL) Bill only gives until December 2023 for all EU-retained laws to be rewritten or bought into UK law before they are scrapped. Defra has over 570 retained laws on environmental issues, including key laws like the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, the cornerstone protection for our most treasured sites, and the Water Framework Directives that set strict standards for pollution of rivers. The Air Quality Standards Regulations impose limits for toxic air pollution, whilst the Marine Strategy Regulations ensures the government protects our seas. Can you guarantee that these laws will be kept? Given the current nature crises we are facing, ideally these laws need to be strengthened, not just retained.

The Growth Plan promises that the burden of environmental assessments for infrastructure development will be reduced, with the habitats and species regulations reformed. The ongoing political narrative suggests that the Habitats Regulations and other EU environmental legislation is at great risk – particularly as the REUL Bill requires that new legislation should not impose an additional burden on business. Can you guarantee that habitats and species protections will be retained and strengthened?

**“The Government’s intention is to remove EU rules which create paperwork and stall development, but which do not necessarily protect the environment”**

Labelling EU rules as ‘unnecessary’ and ‘bureaucratic’ undermines the role they play in creating the kind of country people enjoy living in – one with thriving wildlife, plentiful green spaces, and sustainable communities. In fact, many environmental regulations, like the Habitat Regulations, are essential if the Government has any chance of meeting the legally binding targets set out in the Environment Act.

The planning process is not just paperwork. It ensures everyone knows how the UK Government’s planning policies are to be applied and has a say in what can be built – from housing and infrastructure developers to conservation charities like The Wildlife Trusts, as well as local people who care about the future of their city, town or village.

If the UK Government is not planning to put nature at risk, I would hope it can offer guarantees on the issues I have raised above. Once again, please help me to defend nature by doing all you can to urge the Prime Minister, the Environment Secretary and the UK Government to put a stop to this attack and instead ramp up action to protect our wildlife, our climate, and our futures.

Please respond to my points and questions above. Thank you

Yours sincerely,