



The countryside charity
Sussex

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4 October 2022

Letter to Sussex MPs

Nurturing the Environment will help the Economy to Grow

We would ask you to vigorously oppose any measures to deregulate environment protection – such protections of the landscape and biodiversity we love and need are key to tackling climate change, reversing biodiversity decline, providing quality food and solving the latest crisis – in water supply and treatment. The government must remember what a spur to innovation regulations can be. Sustainable prosperity will not happen if the environment is not protected.

The government needs to be nature's friend not its declared enemy. Ministers need to urgently rethink their plans for the environment because, sadly, the new Government appears to see nurturing our common environment as the enemy of its Grow the Economy focus. In this they are denying reality. We depend on the natural world for all our prosperity and for continued growth. There must be no scrapping or watering-down of well-evidenced legislation such as the Habitats Regulations. After all, they are based on UK research. This evidence was not made up by Brussels.

We are deeply worried by a whole raft of initiatives announced in recent days, amongst them:

- The PM's announced intention to scrap all provisions seen by the Government as inhibiting economic growth has focussed on the jettisoning of nature and climate control regulations whose purpose is to enhance our natural environment and natural assets;
- The rumour that DEFRA will abandon all the work on Environmental Land Management Schemes designed to redirect £2 billion of previous Common Agricultural Policy subsidies based on land ownership towards productive and environmental enhancement uses of agricultural land for the public good (think what good £2bn, productively applied, could do for our natural countryside)! back toward simply rewarding farmers for holding their land rather than how they use it;
- Overturning the moratorium on fracking in the name of furthering the security of our gas supplies and offering further fossil fuel exploration licences (please read the appendix to this letter to understand why supporting fracking is particularly perverse for Sussex);
- The weakening of environmental elements of the planning system where they might be detrimental to proposed new housing or business developments.

The premise on which these "reforms" are proposed, namely that they impede economic growth, is fundamentally misplaced and gravely dangerous to our sustainable prosperity as a nation. To the contrary, it is impossible to have an economically vibrant economy isolated from a thriving natural environment and clement climate, so interconnected are they. Sustainable economic growth is only possible (and arguably only affordable) by working with our natural capital assets.

To promote, enhance and protect a thriving countryside for everyone's benefit

President: Lord Egremont

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The Government should be listening to its own commissioned experts on the significant beneficial role that environmental enhancement should be playing in a long-term sustainable economic future:

- HM Treasury's commissioned Dasgupta report on the Economics of Biodiversity concluded in February 2021 that *"nature, and the biodiversity that underpins it, ultimately sustains our economies, livelihoods and well-being, and so our decisions must take into account the true value of the goods and services we derive from it"*.
- The Government's Office for Environmental Protection has in recent days warned the Government that *"reforms proposed in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill must be approached with care if they are to avoid undermining current levels of environmental protection"* and that *"Reform needs to be approached with care, based on proper assessment of its impacts, to avoid undermining existing high levels of environmental protection and ensure clarity for those to whom the law applies."*
- Natural England's chair, Tony Juniper has written: *"Growth that results in the destruction of nature will, in the end, cease. Economic development that by contrast drives toward net zero greenhouse gas emissions and the recovery of nature is a very different prospect."*
- The Climate Change Committee has published regular reports on how vital a healthy natural environment is to regulating greenhouse gas emissions, and on how the planning system could be much better employed to that end.

Latest Government initiatives on this issue are incompatible with the manifesto in which it was elected to bring forward a 25-year environmental enhancement plan, to ensure net gains for nature and to meet 5 yearly binding climate change targets on a road to net zero by 2050 - targets which the Climate Change Committee has already warned that the Government is in serious danger of missing. Much of the enormous amount of governmental and private initiative work across a whole range of environmental initiatives is in danger of been dust-binned.

Very many Sussex residents have seen recent moves as a direct, deeply worrying, attack on the future sustainable health of our environment and climate – an attack that is as misguided as it is dangerous. It is also a betrayal of an important manifesto promise.

We ask and urge you to use your influence as a Sussex MP to persuade the Ministers leading the Growth Plan and Levelling-up Agenda to reconsider all proposals they may have to diminish the role of environmental and climate change regulation in those initiatives. Instead, any review of laws/regulations should be examining how they can best be improved by using our natural capital and ecosystem services to improve our economic welfare instead of focusing on how to abolish them.

An enhanced environment has to be at the heart of our future long term national prosperity, not sacrificed to short term economic growth.

Please would you let us know how you will take this request forward.

Yours faithfully

Dan Osborn

Chair, CPRE Sussex, the Sussex countryside charity

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