



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Trudy Harrison MP
Minister for Natural Environment and Land Use

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

Lynne Farrell
President, Botanical Society of Britain
and Ireland
lynneonmull@btinternet.com

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Julia Hanmer
Chief Executive, Botanical Society of
Britain and Ireland
julia.hanmer@bsbi.org

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Dear Lynne and Julia

Thank you for your letter of 3 October to the former Secretary of State about the Government's ambition for nature recovery. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The Government has no plans to scrap the environmental land management schemes (ELMS). In light of the pressures farmers are facing as a result of the current global economic situation, including spikes in input costs, it is only right that we look at how best to deliver the ELMS to see where and how improvements can be made. We will be introducing policies that work for farm businesses, food production and the environment. Later this year we will set out more details of plans on how we will increase food security while strengthening the resilience and role of farmers as stewards of the British countryside.

Farmers play a crucial role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment. If we want farming and food production to be resilient and sustainable over the long term, then farming and nature can and must go hand in hand.

Our aim is to enable farmers to have resilient businesses, produce the food our nation needs, and also to protect and enhance the natural environment. This includes looking after our soils, reducing air and water pollution, managing flood risk, reducing emissions and sequestering carbon.

The Sustainable Farming Incentive will pay farmers for actions they take to manage their land in an environmentally sustainable way. Actions will be grouped into simple packages known as standards, to make it as easy as possible for farmers to identify what actions are best suited to their land.

The Government has been piloting three grassland standards, and learnings from these have informed the standards that we introduced in 2022. The Improved Grassland Soils standard seeks to support farmers to manage their grassland to increase biodiversity and resilience to climate change, improve soil condition and carbon storage, and to improve water and air quality.

Our aim is to make the schemes attractive and accessible to a wide range of farmers, to help them maintain or introduce sustainable practices as a foundation for more advanced improvements available through the other ELMS.

This Government is committed to supporting a productive and sustainable agricultural industry and in support of this goal we have introduced the Farming Investment Fund. This will provide support to farmers, foresters, growers, including related contractors to build towards an increasingly self-reliant and resilient farming industry, achieving higher productivity alongside enhanced animal health and welfare, and improved environmental outcomes.

We have also introduced the Future Farming Resilience Fund which provides free business support to farmers and land managers during the early years of the agricultural transition.

I would like to reassure you that we are not weakening our environmental ambition and remain committed to delivering on the Environment Act, including setting a new legally binding [target](#) to halt the decline in species in England by 2030, in addition to at least one long term target for biodiversity.

The Environment Act introduced a powerful package of new policies and tools to recover and reverse biodiversity loss in England. Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and a strengthened biodiversity duty on public authorities will work together to create and restore habitats that enable wildlife to recover and thrive, while conservation covenants will help secure habitats for the long term. We are also funding the creation, restoration and management of woodland and peatland through our Nature for Climate Fund. Additionally, we are developing landscape-scale partnership Nature Recovery Projects and strengthening the statutory purpose of our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty so that they can deliver more for nature.

In March, we published the [Nature Recovery Green Paper](#) setting out our proposals to reform our system of protections to better support this ambitious work, including the Habitats Regulations.

We seek to create a system that better reflects the latest science and impending impacts of climate change, our domestic species and habitats, and helps us to achieve our significant goals to recover nature.

The Nature Recovery Green Paper consultation closed in May and we are now in the process of analysing responses and will publish a response as soon as possible, on conclusion of this exercise.

In reviewing retained EU law, Defra's aim is to ensure that environmental law is fit for purpose and able to drive improved environmental outcomes, whilst also ensuring regulators can deliver efficiently. This will ensure the UK regulatory framework is appropriate and tailored to the UK.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trudy Harrison', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

TRUDY HARRISON MP