



Department
for Environment
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To: All MPs

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Dear Colleagues,

Environment Bill - update on progress in the House of Lords

The Environment Bill concluded Third Reading in the House of Lords on 13 October and will be returning to the House of Commons for Commons Consideration of Lords Amendments on 20 October.

The scrutiny that the Bill has received from members across both Houses has been invaluable, and the Government has already tabled a number of significant amendments that have further enhanced this piece of landmark legislation - from a new target to halt species decline by 2030, to the inclusion of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in the Biodiversity Net Gain policy.

I am pleased to announce that I am tabling further amendments ahead of Commons Consideration of Lords Amendments on 20 October, in response to issues raised during passage through the House of Lords.

Single use items

The Government is committed to moving to a more circular economy, and the Environment Bill already enables regulations to be made to impose charges on single-use plastic items. I am pleased to say that a legislative change will be made to extend the current charging power in England to enable it to cover single use items made from *any* material, following consultation. This will help to ensure that we are able to crack down on the use of all single use items.

Conservation covenants

The Bill currently makes provision for conservation covenants, which are voluntary agreements, that are legally-binding once entered into, between a landowner and a designated 'responsible body' to conserve the natural or heritage features of the land for the public good. I recognise the concerns raised in the House of Lords and the Government has listened carefully. While I still believe that it is important that conservation covenants are flexible tools that are open to a wide range of landowners and are straightforward to execute, I am pleased to announce an amendment to the Bill to require conservation covenant agreements to be executed as deeds. This will apply to England only. I hope that this additional level of formality will provide reassurance to landowners, and that it will encourage parties to take legal advice before entering into the conservation covenant, something that will also be reflected in Government guidance.

Soil health target

Alongside the amendments outlined above, I am pleased to announce that, in response to interest on the issue of soil health in the House of Lords, the Government has committed to the development of a new Soil Health Action Plan for England to provide a single, strategic approach to driving improved soil health across England.

More detail was provided in a Written Ministerial Statement tabled earlier today. The full text can be found [here](#). We are also exploring the potential for a new target on soil health under future Environment Bill regulations, but we need to ensure that we have the right metrics to measure the target and the right delivery pathway, which we hope to set out through the upcoming Soil Health Action Plan. The Action Plan will include the development of a healthy soil indicator, soil structure monitoring methodology and a soil health monitoring scheme. These actions will create a robust baseline from which we can monitor soil health, identify trends and inform policy decisions on soil health.

These amendments make this already landmark piece of legislation even more comprehensive and robust, and I hope that they ensure that colleagues of all parties support the Bill as it enters its final stages of passage. If you wish to discuss any of these amendments further, please do get in touch with my office at ps.rebecca.pow@defra.gov.uk.



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