



## BRENT RIVER & CANAL SOCIETY

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 266972

Ms Rupa Huq MP  
Mr James Murray MP  
Mr Virendra Sharma MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

07/10/22

Dear Ms Rupa Huq MP, Mr James Murray MP and Mr Virendra Sharma MP,

We are writing to you as matter of urgency. As you will already be aware, last week the government announced its plans to scrap environmental regulations in favour of creating at least 38 'Investment Zones'. This short-sighted nature-blind act would entail tearing up vital environmental laws across England, effectively putting commercial and housing developments ahead of safeguarding wildlife and nature.

As the Wildlife Trusts commented:

*"We face an urgent nature and climate crisis. But instead of a plan for nature's recovery on land and at sea, the UK Government is pursuing a dangerous agenda of deregulation that puts the very laws protecting wildlife at risk."*

This act would mean that developers can ignore rules currently in place to protect:

- Vital species conservation for biodiversity gain
- Connected green and blue spaces for nature growth and sustainability
- Water quality regulations from polluting sewage

The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. We rank 189<sup>th</sup> out of the 218 countries assessed. Our small mammals have declined more than 70% since the 1970s. The UK Red List for birds facing extinction today stands at 70 species and is almost double the length of the first UK review which took place in 1996. Our flying insect population has declined by 60% in the last 20 years. Half of our 58 resident butterfly species are listed as threatened or near threatened with extinction. We are in the midst of a Climate and Ecological Emergency.

The Government have committed to legally binding targets to start nature's recovery by 2030 and within your constituency, Ealing Council adopted its Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy in 2021 and its Biodiversity Action Plan in 2022. We have **only 8 years left**, and ripping up existing protections will make these targets, on which our lives and those of our wildlife depend, impossible to achieve.

There has rightly been a very strong and unprecedented response from some of the UK's leading wildlife conservation charities and organisations. A total of 79 have joined forces to stand up for green and blue spaces, including the RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust, CPRE, Friends of the

Earth, Plant Life, National Trust, World Wildlife Fund, Butterfly Conservation, Wild Justice and many more.

The Brent River & Canal Society (BRCS) who initiated the idea of the Brent River Park and campaigned for its creation, are asking you as our local MPs to take the following actions:

1. Demand that key nature protections are kept within UK law and not ripped out or weakened within new 'Investment Zones', or elsewhere.
2. Demand that the Government strengthen environmental planning rules – to lobby for more robust habitat and wildlife protections, not less.
3. To support nature and wildlife on a local level within the Brent River Park. Primarily to:
  - a. Actively support the BRCS Clean Up the River Brent (CURB) campaign in holding Thames Water and the Environment Agency to account over sewage pollution contaminating the River Brent.
  - b. Actively support the BRCS Warren Farm Nature Reserve campaign and our 12,800 petition signatories, as delivered to the Mayor of London, by working with us and Natural England to give this rewilded, species-rich meadow statutory Local Nature Reserve designation in its entirety.

In particular, we ask Mr Virendra Sharma, to rethink your position on Warren Farm Nature Reserve and to withdraw your public support for building a stadium and sports pitches which would cause mass biodiversity loss and irreversible damage to our wildlife on this rewilded green space.

We have had constructive conversations with Ealing Council Leader, Peter Mason and Deputy Leader, Deidre Costigan, which are ongoing. Equally, it is important to address that UK nature and wildlife protections are currently under severe threat and that conservation efforts are being critically impacted. The BRCS trustees invite you to meet with us at a time and date that is convenient, so together we can talk further on progressing the above actions.

To quote the RSPB, one of the country's leading environmental charities:

*"Nature matters. A healthy natural environment underpins economic growth, our food security, our health and our wellbeing. It is not a 'nice to have' that can wait."*

We look forward to working with you and await your replies with interest.

Yours sincerely,

Nic Ferriday, Chair

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