



Rory Stewart MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

2nd October 2015

Dear Mr Stewart

We are writing to express our strong concern on behalf of the majority of 48 Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs). The Partnerships welcome the Government's response to the recent published findings of the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) and wish to offer our support in development and delivery of a 25 year plan for the natural environment.

LNPs have worked hard to make a significant local contribution to meet these priorities. Activities and achievements of the more successful LNPs over the last 3 years include the following;

- Establishing local networks that facilitate collaboration across sectors and offer advice and support for practical activity.
- Developing plans covering a broad view of the value of biodiversity, which includes maximising its potential health benefits and opportunities for community engagement.
- Working to improve soil, flood protection and prevention, and promote the services that a high functioning natural environment provides to society.
- Working with planners and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to help develop local strategies, ensure development is sustainable and highlight the value of the natural environment to the economy.

We're sure you will agree this agenda is both extremely broad and very important in terms of creating a more resilient environment, a strong economy and reducing long term risks. Although some LNPs are currently successful some are not. The recent EAC reported on the mixed levels of success that Local Nature Partnerships have enjoyed. A worrying number of LNPs are struggling and the consequences of failure will mean unnecessary environmental damage in these areas, and the loss of a truly national opportunity to protect and enhance England's biodiversity.

As key stakeholders, LNPs expect to be involved in the review that is proposed and will continue to provide information about best practice, relationships with LEPs and their committees and also examples of where barriers have hindered less successful LNPs.

LNPs commend the recently published Government response to the 3rd Natural Capital Committee's report and its commitment to a 25 year strategy to restore nature. LNP Partnerships can help to ensure the environment is not an obstacle to growth but an enhancer.

It is our hope that the proposed review will help all LNPs by developing the means to ensure they are properly funded so they can contribute to the Government's biodiversity core objectives. The current lack of financial support compounded by a lack of legislative backing and clarity around the role of LNPs has brought some LNPs to the verge of collapse. We ask the Government and its agencies to give us greater support in achieving national aims through local action and to ensure they have the support of other governmental departments in one common purpose. Without this support there is a real possibility that several LNPs will be imminently forced to close and thus put at risk the whole LNP structure.

We look forward to your response and to discussing this with you in the near future so we can build on the enormous contribution we can make.

Yours faithfully

Caroline Jessel, Co-Chair Kent Nature Partnership

On behalf of the majority of LNPs