

Rebecca Pow MP
Member of Parliament for Taunton Deane



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

To all Conservative MPs with constituencies in England
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

9 May 2022

Dear Colleague,

Environment Act 2021 – 6 months on

2021 was a momentous year for tackling climate change, nature recovery and protecting our precious planet. Our landmark Environment Act 2021 became law six months ago. Through the Act, we are cleaning up the country's air, restoring natural habitats, increasing biodiversity, reducing waste and making better use of our resources.

In the last few months, we have:

- launched a consultation on Biodiversity Net Gain measures, detailing how new developments in England will need to ensure they have a positive impact on nature and wildlife;
- responded to Julian Glover's independent Landscapes Review to boost nature recovery and safeguard England's iconic national parks for future generation;
- set out the strategic priorities for Ofwat to ensure water companies are required to do more to protect the environment;
- launched a consultation to deliver the largest programme in history to tackle storm sewage discharges;
- consulted on Environment Act Targets which will help inform how the Act will meet legally-binding improvement targets on air quality, biodiversity, water and waste and resource efficiency.

I wanted to share with you the attached copy that may be helpful when writing for your local papers because it is such good news, and it really demonstrates that we are taking a lead on the environment and delivering on our commitments. I think we should be shouting about it! If you require any further information or photos, please feel free to get in touch.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Pow'.

Rebecca Pow MP

Six months ago, we passed our Environment Act. It was a turning point, and an example for the rest of the world to follow, setting us on a sustainable trajectory for the future. Now, we are getting on with the job and delivering on what we legislated to do.

Through the Environment Act, we are cleaning up our air, restoring natural habitats, increasing biodiversity, reducing waste and making better use of our resources.

The Act will halt the decline in species by 2030, helping to reverse declines of iconic British species like the hedgehog, red squirrel and water vole. It will also require new developments to improve or create habitats for nature, and tackle illegal deforestation overseas. It will enable us to transition to a more circular economy, incentivising people to recycle more, encouraging businesses to create sustainable packaging, make household recycling easier and we will have the tools to stop the export of polluting plastic waste to developing countries. These changes will be driven by new legally binding environmental targets, which we are already consulting on.

For me, water quality is a huge priority. Through the Environment Act, we are cracking down on water companies that discharge sewage into rivers, waterways and coastlines. We are the first government to set out our expectation that water companies must act to reduce the harm caused by storm sewage overflows, and in February our Strategic Policy Statement to the water regulator, Ofwat, made clear the importance of protecting the environment. We have gone even further, launching a consultation on our Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan to tackle the issue of sewage discharges. By 2035, there will be 70% fewer discharges into our bathing waters. On the broader water agenda we are setting a wider range of other targets to clean up our water, including targets to reduce nitrates, phosphates and sediment and pollution emanating from historic mining areas.

We have also banned microbeads in rinse-off personal care products, banned the sale of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds, increased the plastic bag charge to 10p and extended it to all retailers and we have consulted on banning single use plastic cutlery, plates and polystyrene cups. We also undertook a call for evidence on other problematic single use plastics – including wet wipes. The bulk of these contain tiny plastic particles which end up in the marine environment when wet wipes are flushed away and this needs to change. We will be announcing action to tackle this shortly.

We are cracking down on waste crime, which is estimated to cost the economy an astonishing £924m per year in England. In the last six months we have announced that we are reforming the licencing system, introducing mandatory digital waste tracking, investing to tackle fly tipping and supporting people to dispose of their waste correctly. We have also published our response to our consultation on Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging, and will be responding to our consultations on a deposit return scheme for drinks containers and consistent recycling collections.

We have already consulted on the implementation of our due diligence requirements relating to the supply of key commodities including palm oil and soya which will help tackle illegal deforestation across the globe. We have published a draft Principles Policy Statement which will put protecting the environment at the heart of future policy, and we have launched a consultation on Biodiversity Net Gain.

When I look back at what we have achieved in just six months, I am hugely optimistic for the future. Our Environment Act gives us the tools and the momentum we need to really deliver for our environment and put nature on the road to recovery during this decade. The Act gained Royal

Assent during the UK's hosting of the COP26 summit in Glasgow. We brought the world together to secure ambitious commitments to tackle climate change, crucially getting restoring nature firmly embedded as an integral part of achieving this, and six months on we are still taking a global lead.

Annex A: The Environment Act will deliver:

- Long-term targets to improve air quality, biodiversity, water, and waste reduction and resource efficiency
- A target on ambient PM2.5 concentrations, the most harmful pollutant to human health • A target to halt the decline of nature by 2030
- Environmental Improvement Plans, including interim targets
- A cycle of environmental monitoring and reporting
- Environmental Principles embedded in domestic policy making
- Office for Environmental Protection to uphold environmental law

WASTE & RECYCLING

- Extended producer responsibility to make producers pay for 100% of cost of disposal of products, starting with plastic packaging
- A deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers
- Charges for single use plastics
- Greater consistency in recycling collections in England
- Electronic waste tracking to monitor waste movements and tackle fly-tipping
- Tackle waste crime
- Power to introduce new resource efficiency information (labelling on the recyclability and durability of products)
- Regulate shipment of hazardous waste
- Ban or restrict export of waste to non-OECD countries

CLEAN AIR

- Require Local Authorities to tackle air quality
- Simplify enforcement within smoke control areas

NATURE

- Strengthened biodiversity duty
- Biodiversity net gain to ensure developments deliver at least 10% increase in biodiversity
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies to support a Nature Recovery Network
- Duty upon Local Authorities to consult on street tree felling
- Strengthen woodland protection enforcement measures
- Conservation Covenants
- Protected Site Strategies and Species Conservation Strategies to support the design and delivery of strategic approaches to deliver better outcomes for nature
- Prohibit larger UK businesses from using commodities associated with wide-scale deforestation
- Requires regulated businesses to establish a system of due diligence for each regulated commodity used in their supply chain, requires regulated businesses to report on their due diligence, introduces a due diligence enforcement system

WATER

- Effective collaboration between water companies through statutory water management plans Drainage and sewerage management planning a statutory duty
- Minimise damage water abstraction may cause on environment

- Modernise the process for modifying water and sewerage company licence conditions
- A duty on water companies to 'progressively reduce' the adverse impacts of storm overflows.
- A new duty on Government to produce a statutory plan to reduce discharges from storm overflows
- A new duty directly on water companies to produce comprehensive statutory Drainage and Sewerage Management Plans, setting out how they will manage and develop their drainage and sewerage system over a minimum 25-year planning horizon, including how storm overflows will be addressed through these plans.
- A power of direction for the Government to direct water companies in relation to the actions in these Drainage and Sewerage Management Plans. We will use this power of direction if plans are not good enough. This is a powerful tool.
- A requirement for Government to produce a report setting out the actions that would be needed to eliminate discharges from storm overflows in England, and the costs and benefits of those actions. Both publications are required before 1 September 2022.
- A new duty directly on water companies and the Environment Agency to publish data on storm overflow operation on an annual basis.
- A new duty directly on water companies to publish near real time information on the operation of storm overflows. This means it will be clear as to how often storm overflows are being used, which will aid enforcement.
- A new duty directly on water companies to monitor the water quality upstream and downstream of storm overflows and sewage disposal works. We are also taking further action to address broader water quality.