Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru | Wales Environment Link

Julie James MS
Minister for Climate Change
Welsh Government
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

**05 October | 2022**

Dear Minister,

**Re: Assault on nature protections**

We are deeply concerned about the UK Government's Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, laid on 22 September. This represents the single biggest potential modification of environmental law in the UK in recent history. It puts at risk hundreds of laws that are crucial to protecting and restoring the natural environment, as well as to protecting public health and creating a sustainable economy. It adds to risks coming from other UK Government Bills, such as the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, that looks set to empower the Secretary of State to act in areas of devolved competence by changing environmental assessment requirements.

We have welcomed your government's promise to maintain, if not strengthen, environmental standards following Brexit. Indeed, the First Minister has very recently reiterated the commitment to upholding EU environmental standards in his letter to the Chair of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee. We fully support the Welsh Government's stance on this and welcome the reassurance you have given that you are opposed to the use of the REUL Bill to revoke and reform retained EU laws as they apply to Wales.

To weaken or abandon environmental regulations would be to fail either to think of the long term or to take action to prevent problems from getting worse. It would result in potentially permanent losses to our biodiversity, a diminishing of well-being and extended economic crises. In contrast, your statement on the Biodiversity Deep

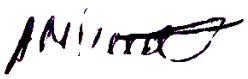
Dive makes clear your commitment to enhance current protections and deliver action at scale to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity. WEL members are ready to collaborate in the ongoing work to realise this ambition.

We also welcome your commitment to uphold the protection of species via the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) by resisting key proposed changes to listing and threat criteria via the 7th Quinquennial Review. Species are the building blocks of resilient ecosystems and responding to the nature emergency will require the full suite of legal tools.

We understand that the implications of the REUL Bill for Wales are still being worked through, but that ensuring Wales retains these laws is likely to result in a substantial body of work for Welsh Government officials and the Senedd. It goes without saying that we feel the promised legislation to enshrine statutory nature recovery targets and establish robust, independent environmental governance all the more urgent given the unprecedented attack on nature that could come through the REUL Bill and other UK Government announcements. We remain committed to working with your team to develop the legislation needed as swiftly as possible.

Many eNGOs are campaigning to show the UK Government that there is public dismay at the recent announcements and public support for robust environmental laws. As we discussed in our recent meeting, we are keen to continue to work with you to ensure environmental standards and ambitions in Wales are upheld.

Yours sincerely,



Annie Smith, Chair of WEL Biodiversity Working Group

Members of Wales Environment Link are:




This letter also has the support of:
Jenny Tse-Leon, Conservation, Evaluation and Research Manager, Froglife
Nida Al-Fulaij, Conservation Research Manager, People's Trust for Endangered Species

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