

Mrs K J Riley
Clerk to the Council
11 Bay View Road
Gurnard
Isle of Wight
PO31 8JF
07305 013718
gurnardparishcouncil@gmail.com

13th October 2022

Bob Seely MP

Re. 2022/23 Climate and Ecology Bill

Dear Mr Seely,

We are writing, as a local council, to request your support for, or at the very least careful consideration of, the 2022/23 Climate and Ecology Bill. This bill is about to go to the House of Lords for its Committee Reading on 21st October. It has been introduced to the Lords by Lord Redesdale who, as I am sure you know, has spoken on various issues on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Parliamentary Party; issues such as the environment, international development, and science and technology. He is patron of various societies including the Red Squirrel Protection Partnership, which surely gives him a plus point for your Island constituency. We understand that you believe the CE Bill is undemocratic in that it would remove powers from Parliament as it seeks to impose a duty on the government to achieve defined climate targets. Targets which include a strategy for reducing the UK's overall contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions to net zero. Such targets would be consistent with attempting to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels and help meet commitments made at COP26 by Boris Johnson, then the Conservative party leader. We are already in the middle of a climate crisis. Scientists have made their warnings very clear; we are on the cliff edge of irreversible tipping points: the collapse of the Greenland icecap, Atlantic ocean current changes and the melting of carbon rich permafrost regions may already have reached the point of irreversible change at just 1.1°C of warming. Climate change is having an impact here on the Island already: droughts and potential water shortages will become more frequent and intense: sea level rises will be exacerbated by more stormy weather. As an island, we are especially vulnerable to such changes. It is surely the role of central Government to have strategic plans for tackling problems which threaten human existence. We are unsure why the expectation of undertaking such a duty would remove powers from parliament. Perhaps your concern is that the bill would provide for the establishment of a climate and nature assembly, comprising a representative sample of the UK population and give duties to the Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). However, these bodies would have an advisory or evaluative role and would surely fit easily within the checks and balances which are normal in our democratic parliamentary system.

The bill would also impose a similar requirement on targets designed to halt and reverse the UK's overall contribution to the degradation and loss of nature. Alongside the Climate Emergency, the world is suffering from an Ecological Emergency. We are dependent on the natural environment and ecosystems for clean water, breathable air and food security; a healthy environment is essential for our survival and the survival of our (human) society and economy. This is a global **and a local problem**. 41% of UK wildlife species are in decline and 15% are at risk of extinction; species extinction is happening at 100 times the natural evolutionary rate. The UK is now in the bottom 10% of countries in the world for intact biodiversity. It can come as no surprise that a very wide variety of long established and prestigious groups are urging the Government to rethink its intention to remove protections from nature in the name of 'growth'. The RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, CPRE — alongside almost every nature group— recognise that the destruction of long established nature reserves, such as the Natura 2000 sites, to make way for more easily passed developments cannot easily be replaced by newly established sites for nature. New sites may take a decade or more to be genuinely positive for nature.

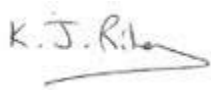
Your Island constituency has been awarded UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status. Within this status all councils, and we hope our MP, should be working to minimise biodiversity loss and damage by attempting to live in harmony with the natural world.

An important aspect of living with the natural world to many of our parishioners and visitors in Gurnard is being able to swim or take part in various water sports safely. Unfortunately the impact of discharges made onto our beaches from the two CSOs operated by Southern Water is having an adverse impact on this enjoyment and on the diverse life forms found in the Solent. It is unfortunate that the Government has so little control over the water companies as a result of them becoming increasingly self-regulating over the last decade. A report in the County Press in December 2021 in which you are quoted as saying that the volume of stormwater discharges is 'unacceptable' perhaps indicates you are more sympathetic to your constituents' concerns than might appear from your voting record on the matter.

*Living in a healthy, resilient and ecologically diverse environment matters to us and to our parishioners as, without such an environment, we may face more serious problems than even those presented by the current cost of living crisis. As Debbie Tann, Chief Executive of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, said: "... **you cannot create a sustainable economy or resilient society, without a healthy environment**".*

We would welcome your support in building a sustainable economy set within a healthy environment and hope you will consider our request for real consideration of the Climate and Ecology Bill.

Yours sincerely



Katie Riley
Clerk to Gurnard Parish Council