



Please reply to:

Emeritus Professor Sarah Nield,
Chair New Forest Association,
Green Oaks, Wilverley Road,
Brockenhurst SO42 7SP

Sir Julian Lewis MP,
House of Commons
Westminster
London SW1A 0AA

12-May-25

Dear Sir Julian Lewis,

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

I am writing to you as Chair of the New Forest Association (NFA) asking that you help protect the New Forest National Park for the future as the Planning and Infrastructure Bill passes through Parliament.

While the NFA understands the need for more housing and infrastructure, it's vital that the bill does not do anything to undermine the existing planning and environmental protections for National Parks and that Parliament take this opportunity to secure changes which will improve these landscapes for people and nature.

The New Forest National Park is amongst this country's greatest environmental and cultural treasures. It provides unique habitats, supports wildlife, preserves the commoning tradition and offers spaces for enjoyment and wellbeing. Additionally, the New Forest contributes to the local economy, attracting millions of visitors annually and supporting many jobs in tourism and rural businesses.

The current planning and environmental frameworks have played a crucial role in protecting the New Forest's special qualities. However, the proposed changes in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, particularly those aimed at streamlining planning approvals, accelerating infrastructure projects and weakening environmental safeguards, would seriously undermine those protections. This risks not only damaging fragile ecosystems but also undermining the very qualities that make this area so valuable. Further information on key aspects of these threats can be found on the

Campaign for National Parks and the Wildlife and Countryside Links websites.¹ What is more the Government's own statutory watchdog, the Office of Environmental Protection, has warned that:

"In our considered view, the bill would have the effect of reducing the level of environmental protection provided for by existing environmental law. As drafted, the provisions are a regression. erosion of environmental protections."²

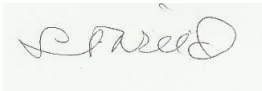
We thus urge you to:

- Speak in support of maintaining and strengthening the protections for all National Parks and National Landscapes in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.
- Support amendments to the bill, proposed by the Office of Environmental Protection, to ensure that environmental safeguards within our most protected landscapes such as the New Forest are maintained
- Also support amendments proposed by the Campaign for National Parks, to promote the efficiency of National Park governance boards both by reflecting a richer skills-base and becoming more representative of the general population.
- Agree to meet with Campaign for National Parks to discuss how you can ensure the government's wider planning reforms and legislative agenda helps to protect and enhance the New Forest and other National Parks for future generations.

The government's commitment to increasing biodiversity and restoring nature in National Parks is encouraging, but these goals can only be achieved if our most precious natural landscapes, including the New Forest, are adequately protected from harmful development and there is a stronger emphasis on nature recovery in all decision-making within these areas.

We look forward to receiving a positive response. Thank you in advance for your support on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Nield, Chair of the New Forest Association

¹ See <https://www.cnp.org.uk/news/planning-and-infrastructure-bill-threatens-to-bulldoze-nature-protections/> and <https://www.wcl.org.uk/planning-and-infrastructure-bill-represents-environmental-regression-it-must-be-fixed.asp>.

² See <https://www.theoep.org.uk/report/oep-gives-advice-government-planning-and-infrastructure-bill>.

Working to Protect the New Forest

