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Environmental Bill

I strongly believe that we need a gold-standard Environment Bill with bold, swift action to cut carbon, safeguard habitats and protect declining species. However, I am concerned that the Environment Bill is nowhere near bold enough to match the scale of the climate and ecological crisis that we are facing.

The Bill has also been delayed which is not good enough in the year that we are the hosts of COP26. It should have become law before the end of the transition period for leaving the EU.

The House of Lords recently voted to amend the Environment Bill. It voted to ensure interim targets contained within it are legally binding.

The Opposition supported this amendment. There have been several examples of voluntary targets being missed or abandoned and, although I accept progress towards goals does not always happen linearly, I believe there is a need to make sure that short-term targets are as legally binding as the long-term ones.

Additionally, I believe the Office for Environmental Protection needs the authority to deliver its remit without interference and greater powers of enforcement. The Opposition supported the Lords amendment to allow courts greater discretion over remedies in cases where it finds breaches of environmental law.

The Opposition also supported an amendment to remove an exemption for the Ministry of Defence and the Treasury from environmental principles for the Government to consider the least environmentally damaging option during its policymaking processes. In my view, these departments cannot be excused from the need to take responsibility for what happens on our planet.

I can assure you I will seek to support these amendments and strengthen the Environment Bill to help deliver the policies that will preserve our planet and protect our environment.

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