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Issues facing Upland Habitats

I support investment in the restoration of a variety of habitats. The Government has said that uplands are precious, but I am concerned it is not doing enough to protect native species and wildlife and that it lacks a serious plan to deliver a recovery for nature.

Protecting biodiversity, halting the decline of nature and restoring habitats and wildlife should be priorities as the keys to tackling the climate emergency through rapid carbon storage and biodiversity gain. It is intrinsically important to protect species and ensure that wildlife can be enjoyed by everyone.

I believe that we need ambitious biodiversity targets. The Government plans to introduce a target for halting the decline of nature in England by 2030 to the Environment Bill. However, I do not think it is acting quickly enough and should set this target urgently to meet the significant challenge of the nature emergency. It should also seek to reverse the decline in nature with a dramatic incline in species abundance.

I am also concerned about the continued persecution of birds. Species conservation plays a vital role in restoring biodiversity and enabling nature's recovery and, in my view, the Government is lacking a strategic approach to conservation through the protection, restoration and creation of habitats over a wide area to meet the needs of individual species under protection.

I also believe we need ambition on reforestation and rewilding. Here in St. Helens, we have seen the benefits of Tree planting, with the Mersey Forest scheme. Earlier this year I supported an Opposition amendment to the Environment Bill for a bold, ambitious tree planting strategy in England, as we need more trees and better protections to restore our most vulnerable habitats. However, the Government voted this down.

More widely, I believe there is an urgent need for a coherent response to the climate and ecological emergency at COP26. Worldwide, unusual weather events show dystopia is here today. The collective ambition to limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels must be translated into concrete action with an unequivocal promise to deliver. The world is looking to Britain, as host of the summit, to deliver, but I am concerned the Government lacks sufficient action to meet this ambition.

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