Dear Councillor [Name],

I’m writing to urge you to do all you can to put a stop to the UK Government’s attack on nature and to defend local democracy in [council area].

I’m deeply concerned that The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, National Trust and others have warned that recent planning announcements will weaken protections for wildlife and undermine local decision-making. This is very relevant to us all. But also, the UK Government is overriding local councils and making it virtually impossible for you to protect nature on your own doorstep.

Regulations that require developers to protect the natural environment have been specifically characterised as “burdens” in recent weeks. Both the new Investment Zones and the proposed Planning and Infrastructure Bill will aim to drive growth at the expense of our natural environment. This ignores the critical role that a thriving natural world plays in boosting food security, tackling the climate crisis, promoting healthy lives, and in ensuring a stable economy.

In Investment Zones, planning policies that protect wildlife and habitats will be suspended. Protections for heritage and preventing risks from floods and highways will remain, but developers will not need to assess the environmental impacts of the work they want to carry out. In these zones, we could see the loss of nationally and internationally protected wildlife sites, jeopardising the Government’s legally binding target of protecting 30% of land for nature by 2030.

It is not only wildlife at risk from these planning reforms – local democracy is under threat too. Applicants wanting to develop in Investment Zones can bypass the usual planning process managed through their council, denying local people their say on what is built where they live. Developers have to engage stakeholders, but there is no guidance on who these stakeholders are, and no requirement for these stakeholders to support the plans anyway.

I hope you will agree that this attack on nature and democracy is unacceptable. As my local councillor, I ask you to take the following action on my behalf:

* Ask our council leaders if they have applied for an Investment Zone in [council area] and, if they have, what area this will cover.
* Speak out against any investment zone proposed in [council area] and encourage the council leader to do the same on behalf of the whole council.

The planning system is far more than just a pile of red tape – it provides vital opportunities for residents to give their views on what happens to their community. By committing to deregulation, the UK Government is allowing developers to get away with trashing our most important wildlife sites and letting polluters poison our rivers with yet more sewage and chemicals.

Best wishes,

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