

Dear Mark,

Thank you for contacting me about Part 6 of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and the important issue of badger protection.

I want to be clear at the outset that I share your view that badgers are an iconic part of our natural heritage and deserve to be protected. Badger persecution is one of seven UK Wildlife Crime Priorities, and a dedicated Badger Persecution Priority Delivery Group – led by the police and supported by Defra – is in place to tackle horrific offences such as badger baiting. Those found guilty of illegally harming badgers can expect to face the full force of the law, including severe fines and custodial sentences.

On the specific proposals in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, I understand the concerns that have been raised by campaigners such as the Badger Trust. The Bill does make technical amendments to the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, aligning licensing processes for badgers with those already in place for other protected species. Ministers have stressed that the purpose is not to reduce the level of protection but to make the system clearer and more consistent.

Natural England will continue to have a central role in this. Environmental Delivery Plans, funded through the new Nature Restoration Fund, will be prepared by experts at Natural England and must deliver a net benefit to nature. These plans will require ecological surveys before any development takes place, and the Secretary of State may only approve them if satisfied they provide stronger protections and recovery opportunities than the current system.

I was elected on a commitment both to improve our natural environment and to deliver the homes and infrastructure our communities urgently need. These goals must go hand in hand, and I will be following the progress of this Bill closely to ensure that commitments to halt species decline by 2030 and reverse it by 2042 are fully met.

Thank you once again for writing to me and for sharing the work of World Animals Voice. Please be assured that I will continue to hold Ministers to account to ensure that any reforms strike the right balance between supporting housing delivery and safeguarding our precious wildlife.

Kind regards,

**George-Maurice Nkazi**

Office of Dr Lauren Sullivan MP  
Member of Parliament for Gravesham  
House of Commons, Palace of Westminster, London SW1A 0AA  
parliament.uk