



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Our Ref: RF33840

10 February 2025

Dear The Rt Hon Alexander

Dear Heidi,

As you are aware, the non-statutory consultation conducted by the East West Rail company concluded on January 24th and I, alongside many of my constituents, duly submitted a response to the details laid out in the consultation documents.

I have been contacted by a constituent who took part in that exercise but who now feels that the consultation is fundamentally flawed following the Chancellor's recent speech in Oxford where she committed to reducing environmental requirements placed on developers involved in projects including East West Rail.

A significant underpinning of the East West Rail consultation premise was the commitment to maintaining, and indeed enhancing biodiversity, and providing reassurance that all necessary steps to mitigate against environmental and ecological degradation would be taken. The Chancellor's words directly contradict that undertaking and therefore I can understand why my constituent might feel that the consultation just completed should be re-run with new clarity on exactly what environmental protections will be in place.

As a reminder, the phrases causing concern are the following:

"the lack of bold reform that we have seen over decades... can be summed up by a £100 million bat tunnel built for HS2... the type of decision that has made delivering major infrastructure in our country far too expensive and far too slow.

So we are reducing the environmental requirements placed on developers when they pay into the nature restoration fund that we have created... so they can focus on getting things built, and stop worrying about bats and newts.

And to build our new infrastructure like nuclear power plants, trainlines and windfarms more quickly... we are changing the rules to stop blockers getting in the way of development... through excessive use of Judicial Review.

This Bill, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, is a priority for this government.

It will be introduced in the Spring..."

Please could you provide the following reassurances for me to share with my constituents who are alarmed by this:

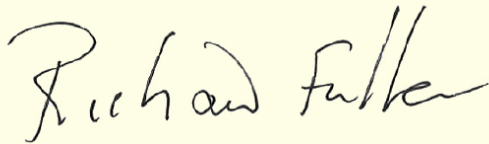
1. Will all commitments to biodiversity and environmental protections outlined in the East West Rail consultation document remain unaffected by the Chancellor's statement and not be subsequently weakened as a result of the proposed Planning and

Infrastructure Bill?

2. Irrespective of any payments into the nature restoration fund, will there be safeguards to ensure that developers cannot offset reduced biodiversity and environmental protections on one project, such as East West Rail, by citing gains elsewhere in the country?

Sincerely

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Fuller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and 'F'.

Richard Fuller MP