

Thank you for this opportunity to set out for you the purpose of a Private Members Bill that I have introduced in the House of Lords. It is called the “Environmental Targets (Public Authorities) Bill”.

The Bill creates a duty on relevant public authorities, including councils, to contribute to the Government’s targets for climate and nature.

These are legally binding commitments in the Climate Change Act 2008 and the Environment Act 2021. They include the requirement to reach net zero by 2050, to have reduced greenhouse gas emissions to 68% below 1990 levels by 2030, and to halt the decline of biodiversity by 2030.

Both statutory watchdogs, the Climate Change Committee and the Office for Environmental Protection, have reported that the Government is not on track to meet its own targets for climate and nature.

This is where my Bill comes in. Local Authorities and many other public bodies have a key role to play in meeting the targets, but do not have a legal duty to do so. Councils make decisions every day, on planning, transport, habitats and so on, that will determine whether the targets are met. So, I am delighted that eight Councillors from across the political spectrum and from different parts of the country signed a briefing in support of a statutory duty. According to the LGA about 2/3 of councils are not confident that they will achieve their net zero target. A statutory duty would raise everyone’s game.

At second reading of my Bill, the Minister hinted that the central idea of my Bill might be reflected in the Government’s revision of the Environmental Improvement Plan, and she committed to continuing to discuss this with me.

I am most grateful to Councillor Wisdom DaCosta for his personal support and encouragement. We all need to work together on dealing with the climate and nature crisis, the biggest challenge we face for the future of our children and grandchildren.