



Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

CC Rt Hon Steve Reed MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

By Email

31 October 2024

Dear Rachel,

I am writing to express my serious concern about the real-terms reduction in the DEFRA day to day (RDEL) budget announced in yesterday's budget statement. This decision raises significant questions regarding the government's commitment to supporting nature-friendly farming and the effective enforcement of water pollution rules – both critical components of our efforts to protect and restore the UK's natural environment.

As you know, the UK faces escalating pressures on its natural resources, with biodiversity declining at an alarming rate and essential ecosystems under threat. Agriculture plays a vital role in addressing these challenges, and the importance of incentivizing nature-friendly farming cannot be overstated. Such practices are integral to delivering the government's environmental targets, from protecting biodiversity and soil health to reducing carbon emissions and ensuring clean water supplies. However, the ~2% real-terms reduction in DEFRA's revenue budget over the next two years raises concerns about the government's capacity to support these critical environmental goals – especially considering that its budget is already insufficient.

With a smaller budget, DEFRA faces increased challenges in enforcing water pollution action, monitoring compliance, and delivering support to farmers who are eager to adopt sustainable practices. Adequate funding is essential to provide both the technical and financial support farmers need to transition to and maintain nature-friendly approaches.

I urge the government to consider the serious implications of an insufficient DEFRA budget on nature friendly farming and water pollution, and to provide assurance that robust funding will remain available to support nature-friendly farming initiatives and the enforcement of water quality standards. Such investments are crucial to securing a sustainable future for food and farming, and a healthier environment today and for generations to come.



Ellie Chowns MP
Member of Parliament for North Herefordshire
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Thank you for your attention to this important issue – I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Chowns'.

Ellie Chowns MP, North Herefordshire.