

10 February 2025

Dear Chancellor,

Please don't bulldoze through Labour's greatest legacy: England's National Parks

Among the many announcements in your speech on 29 January, were two that are profound for England's National Parks and National Landscapes. Did you consider your mandatory duty to seek to further these Protected Landscapes before making these announcements? For example, how does your support of Gatwick Expansion seek to further the South Downs National Park, when it will have a devastating impact on its tranquillity and dark skies? Did you consider your legal duty to seek to further the natural beauty of Kent Downs National Landscape before deciding to seek private finance for the Lower Thames Crossing? If you are in any doubt about how seriously you should be taking this mandatory duty, you should talk to your cabinet colleague, Angela Rayner, who last week was forced to concede that she had acted illegally when ignoring this duty.

The Lower Thames Crossing does not yet have planning approval but if it does go ahead, it will involve significant roadbuilding in the Kent Downs National Landscape, a Protected Landscape designated for its natural beauty, and afforded the highest levels of planning protection. When the Secretary of State for Transport, Heidi Alexander, decides whether to grant consent for this scheme, she will need to ensure her decision complies with the strong duties which apply in Protected Landscapes as a result of changes introduced in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023. This duty requires Government Ministers and other relevant authorities to seek to further the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes when making decisions which affect land in these areas. This means that any decisions relating to the Lower Thames Crossing must seek to further the objective of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Kent Downs. The Kent Downs National Landscape Team have made it absolutely clear [when commenting](#) on this scheme that approving it in its current form would not meet the requirements of the new duty as *"the harm to the Kent Downs National Landscape arising from the Project could be wholly avoided by choosing one of the alternative locations/alternative ways of meeting the need (such as technological methods of managing traffic flows)"*.

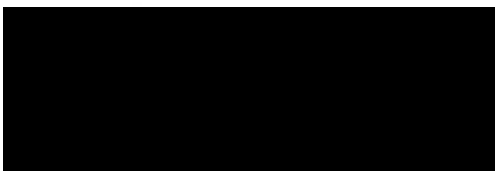
The decision on whether to give the go-ahead to Gatwick expansion will also be for the Transport Secretary, and again she will need to be sure that her decision complies with the strengthened Protected Landscape duty.

Last month, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government was forced to concede that she had acted illegally, by failing to apply the new LURA duty when making decisions about a planning case in the Dedham Vale National Landscape. This was an important precedent – and we should not have to resort to the courts to ensure that legal requirements are complied with.

We would like reassurance that you take your responsibilities towards Protected Landscapes seriously and that you will be applying the LURA duty when making decisions on the funding of any other proposals which affect Protected Landscapes. If necessary, you should also reconsider decisions you have already made about the financing of the Lower Thames Crossing and Gatwick expansion, in order to ensure they comply with this duty.

We recognise that you have tough choices about how best to address the economic challenges the country currently faces. But that should not come at the expense of the Protected Landscapes which are one of your party's greatest and lasting legacies. It was Labour that created the National Parks and National Landscapes (then known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) in the aftermath of the Second World War when rationing was still in place. Labour designated the South Downs, England's youngest National Park, at a time when the country was still reeling from the effects of the 2008 financial crash. Your Labour forebears recognised the importance of protecting England's most iconic landscapes for working people – and from inappropriate development - even in economically challenging times. That need is even stronger today, for the sake of the nation's health, and for the sake of the nature and climate that all our futures depend on. We would welcome the opportunity to show you just why these places are so special and why they must not be sacrificed.

Yours sincerely



Dr Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks

[REDACTED]

From: Transport Secretary <transportsecretary@dft.gov.uk>

Sent: 12 February 2025 12:53

To: action chancellors1 (HM Treasury Mail Contact) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: [Transfer] Subject: Please don't bulldoze through Labour's greatest legacy: England's National Parks From: Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks To: Rachel Reeves 11022025

On the basis we'd be sending the limited response, that's fine

[REDACTED]) | Deputy Principal Private Secretary, Secretary of State's Office, Department for Transport
1st Floor | [REDACTED]

The Secretary of State's box closes at Midday Monday – Thursday, when parliament is sitting.

To contact the Secretary of State's office, please e-mail

transportsecretary@dft.gov.uk

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From: Chancellor's Action - HMT <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>

Sent: 12 February 2025 11:02

To: Transport Secretary <transportsecretary@dft.gov.uk>; POCorrespondence <POCorrespondence@dft.gov.uk>

Cc: action chancellors1 (HM Treasury Mail Contact) <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: [Transfer] Subject: Please don't bulldoze through Labour's greatest legacy: England's National Parks From: Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks To: Rachel Reeves 11022025

Hi Ollie,

We have discussed this on our side and despite the restrictions you have mentioned from a DfT perspective, we would still be grateful if you could do a DfT response.

Grateful if you can confirm if you accept transfer.

Regards,



From: Chancellor's Action - HMT <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>
Sent: 11 February 2025 13:50
To: Transport Secretary <transportsecretary@dft.gov.uk>; PO Correspondence <POCorrespondence@dft.gov.uk>
Cc: Chancellor's Action - HMT <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>; Chancellor's Action - HMT <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: [Transfer] Subject: Please don't bulldoze through Labour's greatest legacy: England's National Parks From: Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks To: Rachel Reeves 11022025


Hello Ollie,

I hope you are well.

Thank you for letting me know.

Kind regards,
Shuhenna



Shuhenna Azharmiah | Chancellor's Office Registry Manager
HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, SW1A 2HQ |

www.gov.uk/hm-treasury | Twitter: [@hmtreasury](https://twitter.com/hmtreasury)

From: Transport Secretary <transportsecretary@dft.gov.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 1:42 PM
To: Chancellor's Action - HMT <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>; Transfer, Ministerial - HMT <Ministerial.Transfer@hmtreasury.gov.uk>
Cc: Chancellor's Action - HMT <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>; PO Correspondence <POCorrespondence@dft.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: [Transfer] Subject: Please don't bulldoze through Labour's greatest legacy: England's National Parks From: Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks To: Rachel Reeves 11022025

Hi Shuhenna,

If we responded to this, given we're the department considering the planning applications referenced, we'd be severely restricted in terms of what we could say to protect the integrity of the planning process.

If you wanted to provide a more substantive response on the specific issues referenced concerning protected landscapes and LURA, then DEFRA and MHCLG respectively would be best placed.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]) | Deputy Principal Private Secretary, Secretary of State's Office, Department for Transport
1st Floor [REDACTED]

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From: Chancellor's Action - HMT <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>

Sent: 11 February 2025 12:12

To: Transport Secretary <transportsecretary@dft.gov.uk>; PO Correspondence <POCorrespondence@dft.gov.uk>; Transfer, Ministerial - HMT <Ministerial.Transfer@hmtreasury.gov.uk>

Cc: action chancellors1 (HM Treasury Mail Contact) <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>

Subject: [Transfer] Subject: Please don't bulldoze through Labour's greatest legacy: England's National Parks From: Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks To: Rachel Reeves 11022025

Good afternoon,

I hope you are well.

We would like to transfer this correspondence to the Transport Secretary.

Please let me know if you are content with this transfer.

Kind regards,
Shuhenna



Shuhenna Azharmiah | Chancellor's Office Registry Manager
HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, SW1A 2HQ |

[REDACTED]

From: Humphrey, Dominic - HMT [REDACTED] >

Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 9:36 AM

To: Peel, Jenny - HMT <[REDACTED]>

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: [Action] Subject: Please don't bulldoze through Labour's greatest legacy: England's National Parks From: Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks To: Rachel Reeves 10022025

Thanks Jenny

[REDACTED] I, we've taken a look on this and think the best thing to do here is ask the Transport Secretary to respond on behalf of HMG, given the responsibilities raised in the letter are all responsibilities of the Transport Secretary.

Thanks

Dom

Dom Humphrey | Senior Policy Adviser – Roads | Enterprise and Growth Unit
HM Treasury, 2 Orange, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ | **M:** 07866165051
www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

From: Peel, Jenny - HMT [REDACTED] k>

Sent: Monday, February 10, 2025 1:38 PM

To: Chancellor's Action - HMT <[REDACTED]>

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: [Action] Subject: Please don't bulldoze through Labour's greatest legacy: England's National Parks From: Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks To: Rachel Reeves 10022025

Thank you, this is actually about the LTC and Heathrow expansion so think best placed for Transport team to lead with CET support on how CX was advised on these with regard to EPPS/NZ.

From: Chancellor's Action - HMT <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Monday, February 10, 2025 1:35 PM

To: Climate Environment Team <ClimateEnvironmentTeam@hmtreasury.gov.uk>

Cc: Chancellor's Action - HMT <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

<[REDACTED]>

Subject: [Action] Subject: Please don't bulldoze through Labour's greatest legacy: England's National Parks From: Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks To: Rachel Reeves 10022025

Hi All,

Please find attached an invitation received by the Chancellor's office on **10th February**. Can the lead policy adviser confirm this has been picked up within **2 working days**.

Please send a 250 word paragraph of advice on this invitation to be put to the Chancellor and a draft response if required by 17th February 2025.

- If a JM is better placed to handle this correspondence, or if a similar letter has been sent to a JM, please flag and advise which PO should lead on the response.
- If no response is necessary please advise a nil response as part of your advice and set out reasons as appropriate. Please advise whether the CX should see this for info.
- For any policy issues which may require a longer time to deal with, please discuss with CX Action and the relevant PS who is copied.

If the recommendation is **to accept**, send up a paragraph and not a draft response. Consider whether a JM could take this as part of the advice.

If the recommendation is **to decline**, send up a paragraph and a draft response if needed. Please also consider whether a JM could take this as part of the advice.

Please attach the original correspondence when you send the advice and draft letter. Please use templates on [CX's Redbox page](#) to format draft letters and advice.

Where to send: All responses should be sent to CX action and copied to the relevant PS, Sophie Welch and other teams as needed.

Kind regards,
Shuhenna



Shuhenna Azharmiah|Chancellor's Office Registry Manager
HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, SW1A 2HQ |



From: Nick Hall <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, February 10, 2025 10:42 AM
To: Chancellor's Action - HMT <action.chancellors@hmtreasury.gov.uk>
Subject: Please don't bulldoze through Labour's greatest legacy: England's National Parks

Dear Chancellor,

Please see the attached letter from the Chief Executive of Campaign for National Parks, Dr Rose O'Neill, regarding your recent speech on growth (29th January) which included your support for Gatwick expansion and the Lower Thames Crossing.

Last month, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government was forced to concede that she had acted illegally, by failing to apply a new mandatory LURA duty to seek to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes in a planning case in the Dedham Vale National Landscape. The attached letter from our Chief Executive asks for urgent reassurance that you take your responsibilities towards Protected Landscapes seriously and that you will be applying the LURA duty when making decisions on the funding of any other proposals which affect Protected Landscapes. If necessary, you should also reconsider decisions you have already made about the financing of the Lower Thames Crossing and Gatwick expansion, in order to ensure they comply with this duty.

We recognise that you have tough choices about how best to address the economic challenges the country currently faces. But that should not come at the expense of the Protected Landscapes which are one of your party's greatest and lasting legacies. As set out in the letter, we would welcome the opportunity to show you just why National Parks are so special and why they must not be sacrificed.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

Political Affairs and Campaigns Manager, Campaign for National Parks

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Registered office Campaign for National Parks, Canopi, 82 Tanner Street, London, SE1 3GN

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