

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

BIODIVERSITY PLAN RISKS CREATING SWATHES OF HOUSING 'SET ASIDE'



Landowners and developers are being urged to respond to a Government survey that could result in mandatory tariffs to fund increased biodiversity or areas of countryside becoming housing "set aside".

As part of its 25 Year Environment Plan, DEFRA has launched an online survey to harvest opinion on how the scheme should operate in future with the intention of ensuring that all residential and commercial development, along with infrastructure schemes, leaves biodiversity in a better state than before.

"It is important that everyone either involved or with potential involvement in future developments plays their part in the survey," says Andrew Bays, a partner at Winchester-based BCM Rural Property Specialists.

"The outcome will affect everyone so it is vital to have a balanced view from landowners, developers, and environmental groups. In many cases, arranging a biodiversity net gain either at the development site or close by will be achievable but where it is not there will be a tariff system to contribute instead to local or national projects.

"While it is important that biodiversity is enhanced going forward it's also important that more red tape from a Government committed to reducing regulation does not stifle viable schemes, particularly where the aim is to meet the Government's ambitious targets for housing provision.

"Developers face adhering to a set of 'biodiversity principles' or a code of practice under the proposals. The Government means well to ensure sustainable developments but in reality the delivery will be highly complex and the 'measurable' net gain possibly hard to quantify.

"The mechanism to determine the net loss and gain will be highly scrutinised and contested by the industry which will be looking to resist any loss from its bottom line. In many areas, developments already have a mandatory contribution through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The industry could argue that these funds should simply be split between enhancing local services and the environment.



“The proposals suggest that the areas benefitting from biodiversity contributions do not have to be near the development, risking swathes of the country essentially acting as housing development ‘set aside’. From another angle, landowners around the country may see developers knocking on the door looking to allocate funds in return for environmental enhancement and conservation, potentially a lucrative source of income from surrounding land developments.

“There are many different views on the topic and I would urge everyone affected to respond.”

The consultation ends on February 10th, 2019 and the survey can be found at <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/net-gain/>

The survey can be found [here](#)

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