

Permitted Development Rights Consultation
Planning Directorate – Planning Development Management
The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
3rd Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

3 August 2026

Re: Permitted development rights: schools, assets of community value, defence and conservation

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. As the leading nature conservation charity for the two counties, we work to protect and restore nature across land and sea, delivering habitat restoration, species recovery, nature-based solutions and environmental mitigation projects in partnership with landowners, local authorities, businesses and communities. We support measures that enable the faster delivery of high-quality nature recovery but believe that any reforms must maintain robust environmental safeguards, support a diverse and effective nature recovery sector, and deliver genuine, measurable benefits for nature.

Question 18: Do you agree that Natural England and operators acting on its behalf should benefit from a national grant of planning permission for the implementation and maintenance of conservation measures within an EDP?

Yes, subject to important safeguards and provided that equivalent opportunities are made available to other conservation providers.

We support the principle of reducing unnecessary planning barriers for projects whose primary purpose is the restoration and enhancement of nature. It is often disproportionately difficult, costly and time-consuming to secure consent for habitat creation, river restoration, wetland creation and other environmental improvement projects. Streamlining consenting processes for genuine conservation activity could accelerate nature recovery, reduce administrative costs and help ensure that compensatory measures are delivered before environmental harm occurs.

However, if Permitted Development Rights (PDRs) are granted exclusively to Natural England and organisations delivering Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs) on its behalf, there is a significant risk of creating an uneven playing field across the nature recovery sector.

A wide range of organisations already deliver high-quality nature-based solutions, including environmental charities, local authorities, private habitat providers, water companies and land managers. Many have substantial experience delivering nutrient mitigation, habitat creation, natural flood management and biodiversity enhancement schemes. Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) has direct experience of delivering successful nutrient neutrality projects in the Solent, including the Nunwell and Duxmore nutrient mitigation projects on the Isle of Wight. Together, these projects have facilitated approximately 2,600 homes and demonstrated that environmental organisations and private conservation providers can successfully deliver strategic mitigation and nature recovery at scale.

Granting planning freedoms solely to EDP delivery bodies would provide a regulatory advantage to one delivery model over others, despite the proven ability of charities and other providers to deliver equivalent environmental outcomes. This could discourage investment in existing and emerging nature markets, reduce innovation, and ultimately constrain the range of mechanisms available to achieve nature recovery. At a time when Government is seeking to mobilise private investment in environmental outcomes, it is important that policy reforms support a diverse delivery landscape, rather than favouring a single model.

The Government should therefore consider a more consistent approach whereby any appropriately accredited organisation delivering nature recovery projects that meet defined environmental standards can benefit from equivalent streamlined planning processes. Conservation outcomes should be prioritised regardless of who delivers them, provided that robust standards are met.

We are also concerned that the introduction of PDRs must not lead to a reduction in scrutiny, environmental safeguards or accountability. The purpose of planning oversight is not simply to regulate development but to ensure that proposals are appropriate to their location and do not result in unintended consequences. While conservation projects are intended to deliver environmental benefits, they can still have impacts on existing habitats, species, landscape character, heritage assets or local communities if poorly designed or implemented.

For that reason, any PDR regime for EDPs should retain appropriate environmental assessment requirements and quality assurance mechanisms. Project promoters should be required to demonstrate that proposals are evidence-based, deliver measurable ecological benefits, align with Local Nature Recovery Strategies and are subject to long-term monitoring and management. Independent oversight should remain available where projects may have significant environmental effects.

Our support for PDRs is therefore conditional on the following principles:

- PDRs should not remove or weaken Environmental Impact Assessment, Habitats Regulations Assessment or other relevant environmental safeguards where these are required.
- Conservation projects benefiting from PDRs should be subject to clear ecological standards, monitoring requirements and quality assurance processes.
- Projects should demonstrate strategic alignment with Local Nature Recovery Strategies and other local environmental priorities.
- There should be transparent reporting on outcomes and mechanisms for intervention where delivery falls short of agreed objectives.
- Equivalent streamlined planning routes should be made available to other accredited providers of nature-based solutions to avoid creating market distortions or unfair competitive advantages.

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- Appropriate consultation with local stakeholders and environmental partners should be retained for proposals with potentially significant local impacts.

In summary, we support the objective of speeding up the delivery of nature recovery projects. However, any new PDR regime must maintain appropriate environmental oversight and should be designed in a way that supports a diverse and competitive nature recovery sector rather than favouring a single delivery model. Wildlife Trusts and other conservation organisations have already demonstrated their ability to develop and deliver complex strategic mitigation schemes that support both nature recovery and sustainable development. Any planning flexibilities introduced for EDPs should therefore be accompanied by a pathway for equivalent treatment of other trusted and accredited providers delivering comparable environmental outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

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A company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales Number: 676313 | **Registered Charity Name:** Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Registered Office: Beechcroft House, Vicarage Lane Curdridge, Hampshire, SO32 2DP | **Registered Charity Number:** 201081

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