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To: Chief Executives of all Local Authorities in England

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Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to you today to ensure you are aware of the strengthened biodiversity duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (the NERC Act), as amended by the Environment Act 2021.

The Environment Act 2021 introduced a legal requirement for all public authorities in England to consider what action they can take, consistent with the proper exercise of their functions, to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The strengthened duty will ensure biodiversity is an integral part of decision making and is essential to achieving our goals outlined in the recently published [Environmental Improvement Plan](#) and the local priorities set out in emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Guidance on how to comply with the biodiversity duty can be found on [GOV.UK website](#).

A key part of this strengthened duty is the new statutory obligation to publish biodiversity reports. Local authorities and Local Planning Authorities (excluding parish councils) are required to prepare and publish a biodiversity report at least every five years.

I would like to draw your attention to the deadline for publication of your first biodiversity report under the revised section 40 of the NERC Act. The first reporting period must conclude **no later than 1 January 2026**, and the report must be published **within 12 weeks of this date**.

You can set out your report in any way you choose, as long as you include the required information and guidance to support your reporting of actions is available on the [GOV.UK website](#).

While I recognise the pressures on local government resources, this reporting requirement is a vital mechanism for transparency, accountability, and demonstrating the meaningful impact of local nature recovery efforts. Your active engagement and compliance are crucial for building a comprehensive national picture of biodiversity action and progress. I urge you therefore to ensure that internal processes are in place to meet this statutory deadline.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to protecting and enhancing our natural environment.

MARY CREAGH CBE MP