

RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL

QUESTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 10

COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2022

QUESTION D

Councillor Slinger to ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:

“What was the response of the Council to a letter sent to the Leader of the Council by Ed Green, CEO, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, on 3 October, that was shared with Labour Councillors and that details the following:

- a. The “anger and distress” caused to the 26,000 members of the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust about the Conservative government’s “attack on nature” through its plans to abolish all EU regulations, and that new Investment Zones will be exempted from rules protecting wildlife habitats;
- b. Concerns about the “abandonment of a post-Brexit change in agricultural subsidies away from public money for public services and back to payments based only on how much land someone owns”;
- c. Local “acute” concern that Rugby Borough Council may “plan to propose Investment Zone sites which would see the loss of nationally and internationally protected sites through a new process which undermines local democracy” by only allowing 10 days to apply and engage stakeholders (and no definition of which stakeholders should be engaged); and
- d. Concerns that local people may well see “fast-tracked, massive scale development and house building imposed on them, destroying local wildlife sites and undermining the recovery of nature with the laws carefully designed to balance such things swept aside, and no opportunity to influence what is happening to their communities.”

Councillor Lowe, to reply as follows:

“Following the receipt of this letter, I have spoken to the CEO of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust over the telephone. I have also written to him explaining that the introduction of Investment Zones was brought forward by the previous Prime Minister, Liz Truss, and that the current status of Investment Zones under the new Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, is yet to be clarified.

I have explained that following the announcement of Investment Zones, a very short time period was given to Councils to put forward potential sites, for consideration. Due to the potential detrimental impact on biodiversity and recognising the Borough's already strong performance in attracting investment, where employment growth is buoyant, the Council did not submit any sites for consideration.

I have welcomed the positive discussions which have taken place to ensure that the Council's ambitions regarding the climate, nature and biodiversity crisis align closely to those of the Wildlife Trust and have invited the CEO of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to meet with me to further discuss the specific issues raised.”