

PDR Consultation Team
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
pdrconsultation2026@communities.gov.uk
By email

Wednesday 5 August 2026

Dear PDR Consultation Team,

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

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposals to introduce new permitted development rights (PDRs) for conservation measures delivered through Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs).

The Rivers Trust strongly supports the Government's ambition to reduce unnecessary planning barriers to nature recovery. Across England, members of the Rivers Trust Movement work with landowners, local authorities, regulators and communities to deliver practical river restoration, wetland creation and habitat enhancement projects. Too often, schemes with clear environmental benefits face planning processes that are disproportionate to their scale, creating delays, increasing costs and diverting limited resources away from delivering nature recovery.

We therefore welcome introducing new permitted development rights for conservation work in principle. However, we do not believe these rights should be limited solely to conservation measures delivered through EDPs.

Restricting PDRs to conservation measures delivered through EDPs risks creating an uneven playing field, whereby projects delivered through the EDP framework benefit from a more streamlined planning route than equivalent conservation projects delivered through other mechanisms. This would be a missed opportunity to accelerate wider nature recovery and could inadvertently disadvantage the many organisations already delivering high-quality conservation at landscape and catchment scale.

Rather than confining new PDRs to EDPs, we recommend establishing clearly defined PDRs for qualifying conservation activities regardless of the funding mechanism or delivery programme. Eligible activities could, for example, include wetland creation and restoration; natural channel reconnection; floodplain restoration; natural flood management measures; and habitat creation and enhancement. Some of these projects are usually delivered through Catchment Plans and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs). Greater alignment between these and these planning reforms would be welcome.

We recognise that appropriate safeguards will be essential to ensure conservation PDRs deliver positive environmental outcomes while maintaining public confidence. We therefore support proportionate eligibility criteria based on factors such as project purpose, scale, location and design, alongside delivery by suitably quality and trusted organisations. We also consider it important that existing environmental protections, including relevant environmental assessment requirements and environmental permitting regimes, continue to apply.

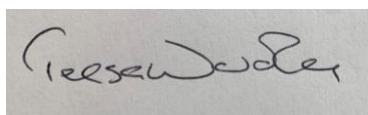
Government also has an opportunity to ensure that this work complements wider planning reforms affecting nature recovery. Planning reforms should work together to remove unnecessary barriers to well-designed conservation projects rather than creating different planning regimes depending on how a project is funded or delivered.

In summary, the Rivers Trust:

- Supports the principle of new PDRs for conservation work.
- Believes restricting PDRs to EDPs only would be a missed opportunity and risks creating an unlevel playing field and weakening local oversight and accountability.
- Recommends these should be extended beyond EDPs to all qualifying conservation projects, including those delivered through other programmes, such as Catchment Plans and LNRs.

We welcome the opportunity to continue working with Government as these proposals are developed to ensure planning reforms effectively support the delivery of high-quality, strategic nature recovery across England's river catchments.

Your faithfully,



Tessa Wardley
Director of Communication and Advocacy