

13th November 2025

Dear Peter

**Re: Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill –
Department for Infrastructure – RSPB response**

The RSPB is Europe's largest voluntary nature conservation organisation and is supported by over 1 million members in the UK, around 12,500 of which reside in Northern Ireland (NI).

We support well-designed and well-implemented Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as part of good, nature-positive planning and development. Effective SuDS can form one part of the suite of measures we wish to see brought into planning and built development that have the potential (when designed and delivered with species and habitats in mind) to benefit both nature and people.

Well executed SuDS has the potential to deliver nature-based solutions, including in urban contexts. Actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems while simultaneously providing benefits for human well-being and biodiversity, have been referred to as 'Nature-based Solutions' (NbS)¹.

NbS can contribute to a wide range of ecosystem services, through the restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems, if implemented with these goals in

¹ Cohen-Shacham, E., G. Walters, C. Janzen, S. Maginnis, eds. (2016), Nature-based Solutions to Address Global Societal Challenges.

mind². These can include trees, hedgerows, peatlands, species-rich grassland, blue carbon stores and other green infrastructure. Where appropriately located, these can for example reduce the effects of flooding and the urban heat island and store carbon, in addition to providing important habitat and supporting numerous species.

Our high-level support in principle for the concept of SuDS does not necessarily translate to implicit agreement with every aspect of the detailed proposals, and we reserve the right to disagree with or object to the detail of policies being proposed.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any related queries.

Yours faithfully

Dakota Reid

Conservation Officer

RSPB Northern Ireland

² Seddon, N., A. Chausson, P. Berry, C. A. J. Girardin, A. Smith, and B. Turner (2020), 'Understanding the Value and Limits of Nature-Based Solutions to Climate Change and Other Global Challenges', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 375(1794), 20190120.