# Angela Rayner urged to simplify UK planning laws to boost pond creation for flood control and biodiversity



A growing movement to reform UK planning regulations is gaining traction as Angela Rayner, the Deputy Prime Minister, is urged to streamline processes that would facilitate the creation of new ponds. The initiative aims to address both the pressing issue of flooding and the need for wildlife habitats. Currently, constructing ponds often encounters significant bureaucratic obstacles, categorising the digging of earth as either engineering work or mining, thus requiring extensive planning permission.

In a proactive effort, Conservative MP Rebecca Smith is advocating for an amendment to Rayner's Planning and Infrastructure Bill. Her proposal seeks to grant 'presumed consent' for creating new water bodies that are less than 0.2 hectares in size, approximately a third of a football pitch. Smith argues that “where there is water, there is life,” stating that ponds serve vital ecological roles as habitats for species like the common toad and blue-tailed damselfly. Additionally, as she highlights, these small lakes play a crucial role in mitigating flooding by capturing excess water during periods of heavy rainfall.

Supporting this amendment, environmental advocates such as Professor Jeremy Biggs, CEO of the Freshwater Habitats Trust, note that establishing new ponds can significantly enhance local biodiversity. He emphasised that simplifying the planning process for wildlife ponds would expedite vital restoration efforts for freshwater habitats across the nation.

The proposed changes by Rayner not only aim to facilitate natural environments but are part of a larger government strategy to expedite housing and infrastructure developments, a commitment to construct 1.5 million homes by 2029-30. Recent analyses from the World Meteorological Organisation and the Met Office have indicated that northern Europe may face increasingly wet winters in the coming years, which underscores the importance of proactive flood management solutions.

In a broader context, the government’s reform agenda includes shifting planning decisions from council committees to trained officers, thus reducing delays caused by local council structures. This initiative has been met with both support and scrutiny. While it seeks to eliminate uncertainty in the building process, critics caution that bypassing local input could inadvertently erode community-led development and environmental protections.

Angela Rayner firmly asserts that while these reforms are necessary for housing development, they will not compromise green initiatives. Recent statements during a visit to a housing project near Didcot, Oxfordshire, reaffirm her commitment to balancing development needs with ecological safeguards.

In light of these reforms, Kitty Thompson from the Conservative Environment Network emphasised the critical importance of creating new ponds for enhancing biodiversity and bolstering climate resilience. She described the amendment as a necessary measure to empower landowners and farmers to actively contribute to ecological recovery and flood prevention, reiterating that “giving ponds permitted development rights is a small change that can have a big impact.”

The convergence of environmental concerns with housing and infrastructure development exemplifies the complexities facing policymakers. As the push for reform continues, the successful integration of these dual objectives—fostering biodiversity and meeting housing needs—remains a pivotal challenge for the UK government.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14764485/Get-Britain-building-ponds-Angela-Rayner-planning-reform-red-tape-combat-flooding.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/22f3e1d7-5ebb-4dca-8a20-9bf19feabcc2)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14764485/Get-Britain-building-ponds-Angela-Rayner-planning-reform-red-tape-combat-flooding.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2025/03/12/planning-and-infrastructure-bill-contains-seismic-reforms-says-rayner), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c80vv9d4xzno)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-reforms-to-slash-a-year-off-infrastructure-delivery), [[6]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-03-09/planning-reform-could-see-red-tape-cut-to-make-building-easier)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/22f3e1d7-5ebb-4dca-8a20-9bf19feabcc2), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c80vv9d4xzno)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2024/12/09/government-proposes-some-planning-applications-could-bypass-committee), [[6]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-03-09/planning-reform-could-see-red-tape-cut-to-make-building-easier)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14764485/Get-Britain-building-ponds-Angela-Rayner-planning-reform-red-tape-combat-flooding.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/22f3e1d7-5ebb-4dca-8a20-9bf19feabcc2> - The Financial Times reports that Sir Keir Starmer is proposing new UK planning rules to bypass local council committees to fast-track the construction of homes, prisons, and infrastructure. This initiative aims to mitigate 'damaging delays' and is part of efforts to meet ambitious housebuilding targets. Under these proposals, locally-appointed planning officers will have the authority to approve projects that adhere to existing development plans and the National Planning Policy Framework. Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner emphasized that this reform is crucial for reducing uncertainties and expediting the building process. The government has set a goal to build 1.5 million homes by 2029, although industry projections suggest they are likely to miss this target by almost one-third. These reforms will also address the significant backlog of planning applications currently stagnant in the system. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/22f3e1d7-5ebb-4dca-8a20-9bf19feabcc2?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-reforms-to-slash-a-year-off-infrastructure-delivery> - The UK government has announced planning reforms aimed at accelerating the delivery of major infrastructure projects, including clean energy initiatives, reservoirs, and railway lines. By amending the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, the government intends to reduce the average two-year statutory pre-consultation period by half, facilitating faster development of essential infrastructure. These changes are part of the government's broader efforts to boost economic growth and restore Britain's position as a leader in infrastructure development. Deputy Prime Minister and Housing Secretary Angela Rayner emphasized the importance of streamlining the planning process to remove uncertainties and expedite the building of critical national infrastructure. ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-reforms-to-slash-a-year-off-infrastructure-delivery?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2025/03/12/planning-and-infrastructure-bill-contains-seismic-reforms-says-rayner> - The Planner reports on the UK government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill, which introduces significant reforms aimed at expediting planning decisions to increase housebuilding and remove challenges to infrastructure delivery. The bill includes a national scheme of delegation, a Nature Restoration Fund, and improvements to the compulsory purchase process. Deputy Prime Minister and Housing Secretary Angela Rayner stated that the bill will 'unleash seismic reforms' to help builders commence projects more quickly, addressing the housing crisis and infrastructure needs. ([theplanner.co.uk](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2025/03/12/planning-and-infrastructure-bill-contains-seismic-reforms-says-rayner?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c80vv9d4xzno> - BBC News reports that Housing Secretary Angela Rayner has announced plans to overhaul planning rules to bypass local authorities, aiming to remove 'chaos and subjectiveness' from the system. The proposed changes would empower local authority planning officers to approve development proposals without permission from council committees, provided they comply with locally agreed plans and national regulations. This initiative is part of the government's efforts to meet its manifesto pledge to build 1.5 million new homes. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c80vv9d4xzno?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-03-09/planning-reform-could-see-red-tape-cut-to-make-building-easier> - ITV News reports that UK ministers are considering reducing the number of official bodies involved in planning decisions to cut red tape. Proposed reforms include removing certain statutory consultees and narrowing the scope of others to focus on heritage, safety, and environmental protection. Housing Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner stated that these changes aim to ensure the planning system is 'sensible and balanced' and does not create unintended delays, supporting the government's pledge to build 1.5 million homes during this Parliament. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-03-09/planning-reform-could-see-red-tape-cut-to-make-building-easier?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2024/12/09/government-proposes-some-planning-applications-could-bypass-committee> - The Planner reports that Deputy Prime Minister and Housing Secretary Angela Rayner has outlined government plans to overhaul the local planning committee system. The proposals aim to encourage better-quality development aligned with local plans by allowing more planning applications to be considered by professional officers and determined in a timely manner. Rayner emphasized the need to unblock the 'clogged-up planning system' to facilitate the building of homes and infrastructure across the country. ([theplanner.co.uk](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2024/12/09/government-proposes-some-planning-applications-could-bypass-committee?utm_source=openai))