

FARMING



► **Nutrient Neutrality** seeks to reduce the effect of nutrient pollution in local watercourses

Turkey Landscape Partnership

Devil will be in detail of latest planning reforms

ON December 15, the Government invited views on a planning reform working paper which reviews the way in which developers can meet environmental obligations.

The suggested changes have a particular impact on Nutrient Neutrality mitigation. In its current form the scheme often requires developers to have secured mitigation measures for any environmental damage their project will cause, prior to the approval of planning permission. Significant limitations and delays on housing development have resulted from this, creating a situation incompatible with the Government's commitment to the building of 1.5 million new homes.

Land agent and surveyor expert Hugh Townsend takes a closer look at the Government's suggested new approach to Nutrient Neutrality mitigation

The new proposition involves the creation of a Nature Restoration Fund which will be run by a single delivery body. The developer will make a payment into this fund which will be used by the delivery body to carry out mitigation measures.

It is suggested that by unifying both funding and management under one body the current piecemeal approach to protecting our rivers can be replaced by a more coordinated and holistic effort

better suited to tackling regional issues such as nutrient pollution.

Importantly, the proposed changes would also allow building to commence immediately upon receipt of payment into the Nature Restoration Fund. Whilst this will be welcome news to developers, it is important to be aware of several points. This proposal, if accepted, will not be implemented quickly. For the time being, therefore, pressure is still on developers to secure their own mitigation if they

wish for development to proceed in the foreseeable future.

One of the most efficient ways for a developer to secure mitigation is to purchase nutrient credits produced by private landowners on the open market. The paper suggests the open market will run alongside the new Nature Restoration Fund.

For further clarification we will have to wait for the proposal to go through parliament and as always, the devil is often in the last-minute detail.

■ Hugh Townsend, FRICS, FIAV, FCIARB, is the land agent / surveyor expert of WMN Farming and can be contacted on 01392 823935 or email htownsend@townsend-charteredurveyors.co.uk.