

28 October 2019

The world is facing an ecological and climate emergency. Around the globe, we are seeing wildlife populations collapsing, ecosystems degrading, and temperatures rising at an alarming rate. At home the story is no different, with the UK experiencing some of the world's most depleted nature and an increasing rate of extreme weather events.

The public support for tackling this emergency, including from the 8 million memberships of our combined organisations, is growing, with mounting calls for political parties to act now. The declaration of a climate and nature emergency by the UK Parliament was a good start but we need to see the environment moving to the heart of government decision-making, so there is no risk of it being ignored in the future.

The UK must set out a clear direction towards environment restoration, at land and at sea, and a clear pathway for achieving these goals. As such, Greener UK is asking that you include the following in your party manifesto in the upcoming election:

1. A future partnership with the EU that has strong environmental co-operation at its heart

Whatever the formal future relationship between the UK, its constituent nations, and the EU, it is vital to maintain close environmental co-operation and high environmental standards. Whether in climate diplomacy, networks for nature conservation or holding each other accountable for transboundary air and plastic pollution, there is a compelling logic to working together across borders. No deal, with its short-term dangers and longer-term concerns, carries unacceptable risks for the environment.

We want to see parties working towards a UK that:

- a. Has a strong environmental partnership with the EU that includes a high level of protection as a shared objective.
- b. Makes a mutual and legally-binding commitment to non-regression, so that standards will rise, not fall.
- c. Has an approach to trade that is transparent, democratic and aligned with our environmental ambitions. People and parliaments must have a full say in our trade negotiations, and we should only trade with countries upholding environmental and human rights.

2. An ambitious Environment Act

The natural world is essential for our future and we have a responsibility to look after it but existing protections are not preventing a continued long-term decline, never mind restoring it. We know that a thriving natural environment is the foundation of our health, wellbeing and prosperity so the next Government must bring back an ambitious Environment Act that addresses these long-term trends.

The act must create:

- a. New ambitious, legally-binding targets to clean up the environment and restore nature, globally and in the UK;
- b. A powerful, independent watchdog to ensure that these targets are fully implemented in the event of Brexit;
- c. A firm legal footing for the environmental principles, including the precautionary principle, in domestic law;
- d. Real world environmental improvements to address the decline in biodiversity, air and water quality, including through mechanisms such as local nature recovery networks in England.

3. Ambitious agricultural reform

Improving our agricultural sector is vital in any plan for a cleaner, greener UK but the Agriculture Bill, the UK Parliament's first opportunity for domestic agriculture policy in 45 years, has been allowed to fall.

Our focus has been on the bill's provisions that relate to England. The next Government must make it a priority to bring forward an Agriculture Bill that:

- a. Has a focus on public money for public goods, ensuring that we pay our farmers and land owners for the services they provide for everyone such as clean air, clean water and thriving wildlife, and promotes environmentally sound management of our land including whole-farm agro-ecological approaches to food production.
- b. Guarantees that this funding is provided over a multi-year framework and is of a quantum that meets the scale of need for tackling the climate and ecological emergency.
- c. Creates effective regulation for farming, the environment and access to the countryside.

4. Truly sustainable fisheries management

For too long, fisheries management has been carried out in isolation from other marine management, with no consideration of its wider ecological impacts (overfishing is the biggest cause of marine biodiversity loss in the last 40 years). The Fisheries Bill aimed to introduce a “gold standard” in sustainable fisheries but has fallen short. The UK must focus on its domestic and international commitments to rebuild healthy fish stocks and enable the sustainable management of shared resources in co-operation with international partners.

The next Government must make it a priority to bring forward ambitious fisheries legislation that:

- a. Includes binding commitments not to fish above scientifically recommended sustainable levels.
- b. Ensures public authorities are accountable and achieve the fisheries objectives.
- c. Commits the UK to achieving full and verifiable documentation of catches and introduces robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, including CCTV on boats.
- d. Sets out a fairer and more sustainable approach to distributing fishing opportunities.

We realise that committing to the above alone will not solve completely the environment emergency but recognise that these issues should be viewed as a priority to be included in your party’s manifesto. Likewise, our colleagues at The Climate Coalition are getting in touch with you separately to outline their specific asks on meeting our climate targets.

We hope that you take the above into account in any development of your manifesto and look forward to continue to work with you on these vital issues over the coming years.

Yours,

Shaun Spiers
Chair, Greener UK

GREENER UK

