

## Greener UK bill drop-in session

4 February 2020

Greener UK is a group of 13 major environmental organisations, with a combined public membership of over 8 million. We came together to ensure that environmental protections are maintained and enhanced during the Brexit process, particularly through ambitious domestic legislation. It is now vital that the government agrees a future relationship with the EU based on close environmental co-operation and puts the highest possible standards at the forefront of its trade policy.

### Agriculture Bill

Farmers are a vital part of the solution to the climate and nature emergency, and need the financial support, advice and guidance to lead this effort. Reforming future payments to focus on 'public money for public goods', such as more wildlife, clean air and water, access to the countryside, high quality landscapes, high standards of animal welfare, and carbon storage and sequestration, is one of the most important steps that the government and parliament can take.

Our priorities for the bill are:

- Maintain the core principle of 'public money for public goods'. This is essential to the reforms set out by the government, and to meeting a range of environmental and animal welfare commitments. All public money spent on improving productivity should also contribute towards the delivery of public goods.
- Secure legal safeguards on environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards of imports, to ensure that farmers in the UK are not undercut by imported food produced to lower standards.
- A stronger framework for long term funding, based on an assessment of the scale of financial need, is required to provide confidence, and further duties are needed to ensure farmers can achieve a fair market return.
- Provisions to ensure high standards of farming and land management in England, and better regulation.

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### Environment Bill

The Environment Bill is a vital piece of legislation. But if the government is to lead the world in environmental law-making, the following amendments must be made.

- A framework to set legally binding targets is welcome, but it must be strengthened with: stronger assurances of comprehensive targets for land and sea; binding plans for delivery; and independent expert advice.
- The independence and powers of the Office for Environmental Protection, including the proposed Environmental Review, must be strengthened.

- If the government is serious about its repeated verbal commitments to maintaining, and indeed enhancing, environmental standards, it must include a straightforward and substantive commitment to non-regression of environmental law in this flagship bill.
- The clauses on environmental principles need wholesale reform if they are to be classed as world leading legislation.
- The waste and resource efficiency measures are too focused on ‘end of life’ solutions to waste and recycling, with much more emphasis needed on the production side and to encourage the reduction of waste in the first place. The proposed charge on single use plastic items must apply to all single use materials. The government should commit to bring forward these measures, including deposit return schemes, as soon as possible.
- To show real ambition, the bill must include a legally binding commitment to achieve World Health Organisation guideline levels of particulate matter pollution by 2030.
- The bill includes several measures which could seriously undermine the water environment. Clause 81 should either be deleted or substantively reformed.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies could be vital tools for protecting and restoring nature, but they will be ineffective unless there are stronger duties to use them in planning and spending decisions.
- Biodiversity net gain rules must be clarified to ensure that they do not allow destructive new development, and to ensure that newly created habitat is protected for the future.
- The bill is silent on tackling the UK’s global footprint. This must be addressed else the UK risks undermining its global leadership credentials ahead of key international summits.

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## Fisheries Bill

The Fisheries Bill is a framework bill, which legislates for access to UK waters and management of UK fisheries having left the EU. With UK waters amongst the most heavily exploited in the world, ensuring we fish sustainably will end overfishing in UK waters, help tackle climate change and contribute to restoring our precious marine ecosystem.

To achieve truly sustainable fisheries management, the Fisheries Bill must include:

- Binding commitments not to fish above scientifically recommended sustainable levels
- A binding commitment to introduce ambitious fisheries management plans and a timeframe for publishing and implementing the plans.
- Rolling out CCTV cameras on all vessels fishing in UK waters to record what is being caught, ensuring robust monitoring and enforcement.
- A fairer and more sustainable approach to distributing fishing opportunities benefitting coastal communities and new entrants.
- Provisions to ensure public authorities are accountable for and achieve the fisheries objectives in the bill — spanning climate change mitigation, reducing by-catch of protected species, and data collection.
- Measures that ensure stocks shared with other countries are managed sustainably.

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## Trade Bill

How post-Brexit international trade is designed and conducted could have significant implications for the environment, from the quality of the products we import to our global environmental footprint. The UK should develop a trade policy for both people and planet and use this opportunity to ensure future international trade agreements are consistent with the action needed to respond to the environmental crisis, promoting high standards and dramatically reducing the UK's environmental impact, both domestically and overseas in line with its international environmental commitments.

Greener UK's priorities for UK trade policy are:

- Trade policy must be transparent, with trade mandates and agreements scrutinised and voted on by Parliament, and be developed with proper public participation. Currently Parliament will not get the opportunity to have a say on the UK's trade objectives, despite the importance of future free trade agreements.
- The UK must prioritise a deal with the EU ahead of the US, protecting high environmental standards and negotiating a relationship that has environmental co-operation at its core as well as smooth trading agreements.
- Guarantee meaningful and enforceable commitments to non-regression to ensure trade policy does not put pressure on our existing environmental standards. We have the chance to do things better than the EU, but we are yet to see any legal guarantee that our standards will get better, not worse.
- Trade policy must reduce our global environmental footprint and reinforce existing international environmental commitments such as the Paris Climate Agreement and Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

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