

Consultation launched on environmental principles

Ministers will put protecting the environment at the heart of future policy, under new plans set out today (Wednesday 10 March).

The landmark Environment Bill will create a duty on ministers across Whitehall to be guided by five internationally recognised environmental principles when making policy – protecting the environment for the next generation and demonstrating to the world that the environment is at the front and centre of the Government's work, ahead of the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

We want to embed the environment in the design, development and delivery of the Government's work.

Our environmental principles are essential, and will ensure that ministers across Whitehall are guided to not just protect the environment, but tackle problems at their origin.

This will deliver our pledge to leave the environment in a better state for future generations.

This legally binding statement will introduce five environmental principles, committing the government to building back greener. These principles are:

- The integration principle is the principle which states that policy-makers should look for opportunities to embed environmental protection in other fields of policy that have impacts on the environment.
- The prevention principle means that government policy should aim to prevent, reduce or mitigate harm.
- The rectification at source principle means that if damage to the environment cannot be prevented it should be tackled at its origin.
- The polluter pays principle is the principle that those who cause pollution or damage to the environment should be responsible for mitigation or compensation.
- The precautionary principle states that where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, a lack of scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

There is no pathway to tackling climate change that does not involve the recovery and protection of nature. As hosts of COP26 this year, President of the G7 and a key player in the CBD COP15, the UK is leading the climate change agenda and the environmental principles will help to bring government, society and the world Together for our Planet.

The Government is consulting on the draft policy statement on the five environmental principles which sets out how they should be interpreted and proportionately applied.

The policy statement will guide ministers across Government departments towards opportunities to prevent environmental damage whilst supporting innovation and sustainable development, helping the Government in its aim to deliver the most ambitious environmental programme of any country on earth.

Defra will support government departments in understanding and applying the requirements of the new duty in their policymaking. Defra will provide information workshops and training, and incorporate the principles into existing government policy guidance documents, such as the Treasury's Green Book.

[You can respond to the consultation here.](#)