

Greens call to extend legal protections for wildlife



Green Party

7 December 2022

- **Call for legal protections for wildlife and habitats in England and Wales comes as COP15 biodiversity summit meets in Montreal**
- **Regeneration of nature should be at the heart of all policy making**

Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay has called on the government to introduce a Rights of Nature Act [1] as scientists, government officials and activists gather for the UN COP15 biodiversity summit in Montreal today [Wednesday, 7 December].

The Act would extend legal protections for wildlife and habitats in England and Wales, and establish an independent Commission for Nature to oversee the Act's enforcement.

Ramsay has also accused the environment secretary, Thérèse Coffey, of arriving "empty handed" at the UN COP15 biodiversity summit in Montreal. He said a Rights of Nature Act is exactly what is needed to demonstrate the UK is genuinely committed to halting and reversing species decline.

Adrian Ramsay said:

"This government stands accused by a wide variety of environmental and conservation groups of an attack on nature [2]. Ministers deny this, but the government is pushing through new laws that will weaken protections for nature and dragging its feet on introducing the promised nature-friendly farming payment scheme.

"Despite the UK being one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, Thérèse Coffey is attending the UN biodiversity summit empty handed.

"There is little confidence in the government meeting its target to halt the decline in species by 2030 [4], and the government appears to have made no progress on its commitment to restore 30% of land for nature by 2030.

“Instead, the pace that we are losing nature continues to accelerate and there is no sign of a reversal in this trend. We face an ecological emergency which poses real threats to human society – to food and water supplies, to clean air, to our ability to adapt to a warming world.

“This is why the Green Party wants to see a Rights of Nature Act [5]. This would provide legal protections for wildlife and habitats in England and Wales, and be enforced by an independent Commission for Nature. It would also ensure that the regeneration of nature is at the heart of all policy considerations.

“Such an Act would also seek to increase accessibility to nature for all, as this is an important way to improve physical and mental health and general wellbeing.

“If the UK government wants to demonstrate a genuine commitment to halting and reversing species decline, and avoid arriving at future biodiversity summits empty handed, it will show leadership by introducing a Rights of Nature Act.”

Notes

1. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/minsmere/>
2. <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2021/10/23/green-party-backs-a-rights-of-nature-act-to-give-nature-legal-rights/>
3. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/rspb-england-government-national-trust-wildlife-trusts-b2174501.html>
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/28/tories-embarrassingly-poor-nature-targets-2030-labour-says>
5. <https://theecologist.org/2021/nov/01/rights-nature>

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