

Environment Bill sets out vision for a greener future

Our precious natural environment will be better protected for generations to come with today's (Thursday 30 January) introduction of a far-reaching Environment Bill.

The speedy return of the Bill to Parliament following the General Election underlines the government's commitment to tackling climate change and to protecting and restoring our natural environment for future generations.

For the first time, the enhanced Bill will create new powers to stop the exports of polluting plastic waste to developing countries, which could prevent harmful waste from being shipped out of sight whilst boosting the UK's domestic recycling system.

Tackling plastic pollution is just one example of where our commitments to the environment will go beyond the EU's level of ambition and – by freeing ourselves from future changes to EU law – we will be able to lead the way at home and abroad to deliver global environmental change.

More broadly, the ground-breaking Bill will enshrine environmental principles in law and introduce measures to improve air and water quality, tackle plastic pollution and restore habitats so plants and wildlife can thrive.

The Bill will include a new commitment to review the biggest developments in environmental legislation from around the world every other year. We use the findings in considering the UK's own environmental plans.

This will work alongside a requirement for current and future Ministers to make a statement to Parliament identifying environmental impacts of all new environmental primary legislation – demonstrating the government's ambition to be a world leader on these issues.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

We are facing climate change and our precious natural environment is under threat. We need to take decisive action.

We have set out our pitch to be a world leader on the environment as we leave the EU and the Environment Bill is a crucial part of achieving this aim. It sets a gold standard for improving air quality, protecting nature, increasing recycling and cutting down on plastic waste.

This will build on the UK's strong track record as the [first major economy to commit to reach net zero emissions by 2050](#) and will drive further action in this super year for the environment, culminating in the UK welcoming the world to the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference in November in Glasgow.

As well as the measures outlined above, legislation will create legally-binding environmental improvement targets. A new independent Office for Environmental Protection will be established to scrutinise environmental policy and law, investigate complaints and take enforcement action against public authorities, if necessary, to uphold our environmental standards. The office's powers will cover all climate change legislation and hold the government to account on its commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This ambition will be supported by championing nature-based solutions, helping to demonstrate our commitment to tackle climate change.

The Bill places the bold ambition of our flagship [25 Year Environment Plan](#) on a statutory footing and creates powers to enhance nature and habitats, and combat the devastating effects of plastics on our natural environment. Introducing charges for a number of single use plastic items will build on the success of the government's 5p plastic bag charge, which has cut sales from the biggest supermarkets by 90% since 2015.

The Bill, included in December's [Queen's Speech](#) and introduced today, will:

- ensure the environment is at the heart of all government policy making and that this government – and future governments – are held to account if they fail to uphold their environmental duties, including meeting [net-zero by 2050](#) and wider long-term legally binding targets on biodiversity, air quality, water, and resource efficiency and waste management that are established under the Bill. And, as announced for the first time today, we will conduct a review every two years of significant developments in international legislation on the environment to ensure we keep abreast of developments in driving forward our environmental protection legislation. We will publish this review and ensure its findings are factored into our Environmental Improvement Plan and environmental target setting process, both of which will be enshrined in law.
- transform the way we manage our waste – through powers that enable us to require producers to take more responsibility for the products and materials they place on the market, including when they become waste, introducing a consistent approach to recycling, tackling waste crime, creating powers to introduce bottle deposit return schemes and having more effective litter enforcement. A power to stop the export of polluting plastic waste to less developed countries will ensure we deal with more of our waste at home and lighten our footprint on the planet. We will consult with industry, NGOs, and local authorities on specific

restrictions or prohibitions. The Bill will also create powers to introduce new charges for single use plastic items to minimise their use and incentivising reusable alternatives to reduce their environmental impact.

- improve air quality – by introducing measures to reduce pollution so children and young people can live longer healthier lives. We are committing to set an ambitious, legally-binding target to reduce fine particulate matter, the pollutant of greatest harm to human health. In addition, this Bill will ensure that local authorities have a clear framework for tackling air pollution and simple to use powers to address pollution in their areas. The government will also be empowered to mandate manufacturers to recall vehicles and machinery when they do not meet the relevant environmental standards.
- restore and enhance nature – through ‘biodiversity net gain’ we will ensure that the new houses we build are delivered in a way which protects and enhances nature, helping to deliver thriving natural spaces for local communities. We will lay the foundation for the Nature Recovery Network to deliver long lasting action for nature by establishing Local Nature Recovery Strategies, strengthening the duty on public authorities to enhance biodiversity and giving communities a greater say in the management of street trees. We are also legislating for conservation covenants to improve long term conservation management.
- protect precious water resources – by increasing sustainable water management through securing long-term, resilient water and wastewater services in the face of a changing climate. Powers to direct water companies to work together to meet current and future demand for water will make planning more robust.

The Bill builds on this government’s decisive action to protect the environment, as set out in our 25 Year Environment Plan. Legislation to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and hosting the Climate-focussed COP26 in 2020 will also keep the UK at the forefront of international work on these issues.

The Bill was included in December’s ambitious Queen’s Speech which outlined the government’s plans to take us out of the EU, overhaul our immigration system, and enshrine in law record investment for the NHS.

What is new in this Bill:

- Powers to stop the exports of polluting plastic waste to developing countries: Today’s Bill includes a power which will enable the government to deliver its pledge to ban or restrict the export of polluting plastic waste to non-OECD countries. We will consult with industry, NGOs, and local authorities on specific restrictions or

prohibitions.

- A two-yearly review of the significant developments in international legislation on the environment to ensure we keep abreast of developments in driving forward our environmental protection legislation: We will be a global leader in championing the most effective policies and legislation for our environmental ambition. We will publish a report of the significant developments in international legislation on the environment every two years and ensure its findings are factored into our Environmental Improvement Plan and environmental target setting process, both of which will be enshrined in law.

Housing Secretary: beautiful homes should become 'norm'

Well-designed, high quality homes and tree-lined streets should be the 'norm – not the exception', Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP has said today (30 January 2020), following the launch of the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission's final report.

Living in Beauty – the first report of its kind led by the late Sir Roger Scruton and Nicolas Boys Smith – contains over 130 practical recommendations to support the creation of more beautiful communities, including:

- planting millions of trees over the next 5 years, as well as opening old canals and supporting every home to have its own or access to a fruit tree
- speeding up the planning process for beautiful buildings through a new 'Fast Track for Beauty' rule for councils
- increasing democracy and involving communities in local plans and planning applications, including using digital technology like virtual reality and 3D modelling to help locals shape their own areas

Welcoming the report at the Garden Museum, Lambeth, the Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP will say:

Today's report is important for many reasons, not least because of the powerful argument it makes that a sense of place still matters

– and, arguably, in our fast-paced, globalised world, matters perhaps more than ever.

It recognises that our identities go hand in hand with the places and neighbourhoods in which we live and work.

That’s why beautiful, high-quality homes must become the norm, not the exception.

Mr Jenrick said that there was plenty of evidence that instead of holding housebuilding back “championing quality would help us go further”.

He added:

I am interested in the proposal of a “fast track for beauty”. Where individuals and developers have put in the time to create proposals for well-designed buildings, which use high quality-materials and take account of their local setting, it can’t be right their planning applications are held up.

I too want to see a return to planting more trees. We set out in our manifesto that we will expect all new streets to be lined with trees and are working to make this commitment a reality.

I want to see zero-carbon homes being built as standard within 5 years as we learn again how our built and natural environments can work in harmony.

And the report is right that local authorities will need to play a leading role in this design revolution. We will need to ensure they have the right skills and leadership to fully carry out their role as place-makers.

I am therefore determined to do all I can to help achieve the goal you’ve set in the report’s conclusion – that we should aspire to pass on our heritage, the best of who we are and what we have, to our successors, not depleted but enhanced.

Today’s report is the latest step in the government’s commitment to delivering one million well-designed, quality homes by the end of this parliament.

Some of the recommendations are already underway, with a [national design guide](#) published by the Housing Secretary last October 2019 and a new national model design code currently in production.

The government will issue its full response to the Commission’s final report in due course.

The Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission submitted its final report

to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in December 2019 and is published today.

More details on the Commission, it's membership and those involved in advising on the final report can be found on the [Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission page](#).

The government published a [national design guide](#) in October 2019. This sets out how councils can demand better design from developers and inspire the next generation of beautiful communities.

A new national model design code is being prepared that will set basic design standards where local areas fail to adopt their own design code. This will be published later this year.

[FCO spokeswoman statement on UK assisted departure from Wuhan, China](#)



A Foreign Office spokeswoman said:

We are doing everything we can to get British people in Wuhan safely back to the UK. A number of countries' flights have been unable to take off as planned. We continue working urgently to organise a flight to the UK as soon as possible.

We remain in close contact with the Chinese authorities and conversations are ongoing at all levels.

Published 29 January 2020

Calling for a political settlement in Syria

Thank you, Mr President.

Mr President, the Security Council has met month after month for over four years to support the efforts of the Special Envoy to find a political solution pursuant to Resolution 2254. The success of this process depends on the genuine will of all parties to find a solution, as well as efforts to make progress on all aspects of the process in tandem.

Yesterday, the United Kingdom hosted envoys from the Syria Small Group alongside Dr. Nasr al Hariri. We were all in agreement that a genuine political settlement remains the only solution to the Syrian conflict. But it is clear to the UK that the key ingredient to this solution is missing: the genuine will of the Syrian regime. After years of hard work by the UN Special Envoy negotiating the composition and rules of the Constitutional Committee, we all welcomed in November the announcement that agreement had been reached and the Committee would convene in Geneva. This was an historic moment, which would open the door to the entire political process. And yet it is with deep disappointment, despite the best efforts of the Special Envoy, that after two meetings, the regime is yet again refusing to engage.

Mr President, on other aspects of Resolution 2254, there has been a similar lack of engagement. Despite the Security Council meeting in August to highlight the specific issue of detainees, no progress has been made. At that meeting in August we set out the immediate steps that the Syrian authorities could take to make an important gesture of reconciliation. And we would remind the Syrian authorities of our call for them to release immediately all those arbitrarily detained; to provide lists of detainees and their locations to the United Nations; and to grant the ICRC access to detention facilities.

Speaking of humanitarian issues, Mr President, I found the earlier comments about Western double standards rather strange. The United Kingdom has given over \$4 billion in humanitarian aid since 2012. And the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany fund over 60% of the United Nations humanitarian response plan across all of Syria, including regime-held areas. Instead, Mr President, I'd suggest double standards is when you say you're concerned about humanitarian issues whilst bombing the country.

Mr President, the Syrian authorities, emboldened by their support from the Russian Federation, have refused to pursue any course of action other than a military one. They have used the fight against terrorism to justify continued disproportionate attacks against areas heavily populated by civilians, and to justify attacks against civilian objects such as schools, hospitals and marketplaces – a practice which the Council demanded the immediate cessation of in Resolution 2254.

Right now, despite the announcement of various ceasefires, airstrikes continue in Idlib, where, according to OHCHR, more than 358,000 people have been displaced since December.

It's outrageous that we continue to talk about attacks against civilian targets in the north-west, despite the repeated concerns expressed by the United Nations, and the members of this council, and the ongoing Board of Inquiry investigation. The United Kingdom reiterates that all parties, including those around this table, must uphold international humanitarian law and further calls for the Board of Inquiries findings to be made public.

Mr President, the only hope for Syria is for the regime to reverse its behaviour and commit to a political process which promotes reconciliation and avoids further needless conflict, repression and death.

And, Mr President, for their Russian protectors to get them back to the table.

Thank you.

Foreign Secretary meeting with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo



Following the meeting, a Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesperson said:

The Foreign Secretary's discussions with Secretary Pompeo this evening focussed on future opportunities for economic and security co-operation between the UK and the US.

The pair discussed the US' proposal for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and the situation in Iran and Yemen, and the Foreign Secretary underlined the need to de-escalate regional tensions.

The Foreign Secretary reiterated his disappointment at the US decision to reject the extradition request for Anne Sacoolas and

emphasised the importance of delivering justice for Harry Dunn and his family.

Further information

Published 29 January 2020