

## ***Review of the UK's Existing Policy Framework and the Rationale for the Climate and Nature Bill***

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### ***Assessment of the risk caused by climate change and nature loss to the UK***

- The dual climate and nature crisis is no longer a distant threat, it's here and now.
- Last year, for the first time, we saw an individual year above 1.5°C degrees above pre-industrial levels.
- Britain has become one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, only making the UK more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
- The OBR warns that climate change could reduce UK GDP by 8% by the 2070s, a far greater impact than previously estimated.
- [The Autonomy Institute](#) analysis shows that even under a “best-case” scenario, whereby global heating would be limited to 1.5C, cumulative food price inflation could still reach 25% by 2050.
- PwC [has shown](#), nature's decline poses a stark threat to global economies, with \$58 trillion at risk, that's 55% of the world economy, and the destruction of nature is estimated to [reduce](#) UK GDP by 12%.
- Leading [economists](#) warn that the cost of inaction in the short-term will be 10% to 15% of lost global GDP by the end of the century, wiping out many trillions of dollars of wealth.
- The [Institute and Faculty of Actuaries](#) have warned that a worst-case scenario could see global GDP fall by 50% between 2070 and 2090, with 4 billion deaths by 2050.
- Reporting from [Boston Consulting Group](#) suggests that an upfront investment of less than 2% of global GDP would avoid the loss of an estimated 11% to 13% of cumulative GDP by 2100.
- An [Institute of Public Policy Research and Chatham House](#) report found that not only is climate change already significantly threatening UK national security, it's also severely overlooked as a security threat.

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### ***How current policy measures up against the CAN Bill's core principles***

#### ***Siloed decision-making in climate and nature policy***

- An integrated approach is crucial to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss, and without it, we won't be able to effectively meet our domestic or international targets or prevent runaway impacts.
- [Scientists](#), [experts](#) and [advisors](#) all say that we must improve coordination across Government to effectively tackle the climate and nature crisis.
- In the recent '[Unlocking benefits for people, nature and climate](#)' (2025) report the Government recognised the need for integration, saying “They [the climate and nature crisis] are deeply interconnected, and so too must be our response.”

- However, the [National Audit Office](#) reported that existing weaknesses in cross-government working are undermining the value for money of projects and programmes.
- The [Environmental Audit Committee](#) also found that despite claiming to improve co-ordination, recent reports and consultations have remained siloed between DEFRA and DESNZ.

- The CAN Bill would provide a joined up strategy that would give clear direction for interconnected climate and nature policy making, unifying delivery and reporting, and necessitating integrated Government working, for example putting in place joint ministers or cabinet committees.
- The evidence is clear, we need a joined-up programme/plan to formalise our ambitions, and set the UK on path to a nature-positive, low carbon future.

### **Misalignment with the UK's international obligations**

- The Government has reiterated its commitment to the Paris Agreement and the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).
- Yet, recent decisions undermine this promise, from approving airport expansions that [could cancel](#) out the benefits of the 2030 clean power plan to potentially backing the Rosebank oil field, contradicting the Government's no-new-oil pledge, and putting nature at risk by removing or weakening its protections in law.
- There are large gaps between domestic legislation and international commitments.
- Our fifth carbon budget was set before the Paris Agreement, so unlike the sixth, it isn't aligned with our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) pathway. In fact, it's 33%<sup>1</sup> too high to meet our 2030 NDC, setting us up to fail further down the line.
- The Government [recognises that](#) it will 'need to overachieve on the fifth carbon budget to meet the 2030 NDC', yet its new Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan admits it will fall short of both the 2030 and 2035 NDCs. The 'need to overachieve' has been missed, without the statutory need to do so.
- The majority of GBF targets are not (or are only partially) included in the UK's current legislation, e.g., Target 2 in the GBF calls for the restoration of 30% of all degraded ecosystems, yet our current legal framework proposes restoring or creating only 3.8% of wildlife-rich habitats in England. This is not only far below the 30% target, it only factors in certain habitats rather than 'ecosystems' as a whole, leaving critical ecosystem services that support all life vulnerable.
- Despite acknowledging that legally binding targets drive action, the Government has no plans to correct the shortfalls in the Environment Act 2021 or Climate Change Act 2008 to correct these gaps.

<sup>1</sup> UK NDC 2030 is 68% reduction on 1990 emissions: [812.4 MtCO2e](#) - 68% = 260 MtCO2e. The 5th Carbon Budget is for 345 MtCO2e per year, 33% higher than needed to meet the NDC.

- The CAN Bill would align UK law with international commitments, restoring global leadership on climate and nature and closing the gap between promises and action.
- Enshrining the 2030 NDC (and all subsequent NDCs) in law would keep us on a credible path to net zero, rather than relying on unrealistic emissions reductions later down the line.
- While making all 23 GBF goals legally binding would put nature firmly on the path to recovery, helping to protect communities and businesses from the worst impacts of climate change and ensure ecosystems play their crucial role in sequestering carbon emissions.

### ***Environmental Harm Beyond Borders: Offshoring Emissions and Ecosystem Loss***

- **Nearly half** of the UK's carbon footprint stems from emissions overseas to satisfy UK-based consumption, yet we currently only focus on cutting territorial emissions.
- If we include our consumption-based emissions, the UK's reductions since 1990 falls from a 54% reduction to **just 23%**. That's less than 1% a year.
- When in Government the Conservatives **signalled their intent** to move towards a consumption-based emissions target.
- The UK is a significant global contributor to tropical deforestation, with our consumption (deforestation) intensity being **higher** than China's.
- Despite expert calls, including from the **Environmental Audit Committee**, to set an environmental footprint target, the Government has refused, citing the need for a more robust evidence base.
- Therefore our current climate and nature strategies are built on the premise that we can offshore our responsibility.

- Recognising our entire carbon footprint, as proposed in the CAN Bill, alongside the planned **carbon border adjustment tax**, would **likely** protect or even create jobs, encourage domestic innovation and increase competitiveness.
- Tracking down our ecological footprint, as the CAN Bill would do, is essential if we are to tackle climate change and protect key earth systems - support systems that enable humanity to exist on Earth.
- We are pushing the world's great carbon sinks and stores, the '**global safety net**', to tipping point containing enormous quantities of carbon, once lost this carbon will be **unrecoverable**, meaning that we could lose control of the climate for good.
- Regardless of where the damage we cause to nature takes place, the impacts will increasingly be felt in the UK.

### ***Inadequate safeguards and limited mechanisms for climate and nature action***

- The conservation mitigation hierarchy (CMH) is **essential** to meeting biodiversity targets and protecting UK ecosystems, but it's being undermined.
- The CMH has been redefined in the the Planning and Infrastructure Bill with a system of 'appropriate prioritisation', under which nature protection risks becoming a bargaining chip either for securing extra payments from developers or for imposing additional requirements on them.
- The new approach could allow developers subject to the levy to fast-track projects that cause irreversible, uncompensated environmental harm in exchange for payments via a levy.
- This marks a major rollback from previous Government's policy and has drawn strong criticism from conservation groups, the CMH should not just exist for planning policy, but be used wherever there is potential for the degradation of ecosystems.
- World leaders were warned in 2021 by the IEA, if they are serious about the climate crisis, there can be no new investments in oil, gas and coal.
- Yet, recently the Government began a **consultation** process on their definition of a 'new licence'.
- This **new proposal** would allow the development of new oil and gas fields by drilling sideways out from existing fields, and has been a **strong demand** from the oil and gas industry, the largest vested interest in climate change.
- The Government **will let** the windfall tax lapse in 2030, reducing oil and gas tax rates and encouraging further investment in fossil fuels.

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### ***Implications for public health, safety and community resilience***

- Vulnerable communities are on the **frontline** of climate change and biodiversity loss, facing the worst impacts while being the least involved in decision making.
- As trust in politics declines and consensus on climate and nature action weakens, public backing is essential.
- Citizen deliberative processes in Ireland have shown that tricky, controversial issues, such as abortion reform, can be supported across a broad section of society when everyday people are involved.

- The UK backed greater integration at COP28 by signing the climate, nature and people [statement](#), pledging a whole-of-society approach to climate and biodiversity plans.
- It remains unclear what the depth or impact of the upcoming [public participation strategy](#) will be, as there has been no comment on how it will feed into or influence actual policy.

- The Bill has a ‘social lock’ that would ensure no one is left behind in the transition to net zero and give all communities a voice in shaping a fair path forward.
- Meaningful engagement of citizens has been shown to break ground on immovable policy areas. A well-promoted citizens' assembly on climate and nature would build consensus, reduce polarisation, and provide politicians with publicly backed, practical solutions.