

Trade unions pressure Starmer to back landmark climate bill

- Major trade unions including the NEU, BFWAU, UCU and PCS are calling on the Prime Minister to back the Climate and Nature Bill when it is voted on by MPs next week [24 January]
- The landmark private members' bill is supported by 88 Labour MPs and ministers are under increasing pressure to give MPs a free vote
- The proposed law change sets out sweeping changes to the UK's nature protections and accelerates the Government's existing emission reduction targets

****LABOUR LIST EXCLUSIVE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 ON MONDAY 13 JANUARY 2025****

MAJOR trade union leaders have written to Prime Minister Keir Starmer, calling on him to support the landmark Climate and Nature Bill ahead of a Commons debate.

More than 200 MPs – 88 of them Labour – have already thrown their weight behind the backbench private members' bill which could be voted through the Commons next Friday.

The proposals set out to bold plans to boost Britain's emission reduction targets and increase protections for nature.

Writing to Keir Starmer today, the 15 trade union leaders highlight that the *"climate-nature crisis is already impacting workers' lives and livelihoods across the UK."*

Signatories include the general secretaries of the National Education Union; Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union; University and Colleges Union; and the Public & Commercial Services Union.

They say it is essential that *"Parliament sets the strongest laws to rise to this existential threat"* while protecting jobs and peoples' livelihoods for generations to come.

In relation to tackling the dual climate and nature crisis, the signatories go on to warn that *"there is currently no integrated legal framework to ensure this cross-government mission can be achieved"*

The letter concludes by criticising the lack of action by the previous government, warning that current ministers are at risk of kicking the can down the road on the fight against climate change.

Labour MPs and Climate and Nature Bill co-sponsors Alex Sobel and Olivia Blake have been championing the proposals across the backbenches in recent weeks.

Support has rapidly grown in recent days, with devastating flash floods and wildfires across both Europe and the United States thought to be focusing MPs' minds.

[Zero Hour](#) environmental campaigners who are championing the Bill say MPs should be afforded a free vote, in line with Kim Leadbeater's Assisted Dying Bill which was passed in November.

However, the Government is yet to publicly set out their position ahead of next week's vote.

Co-director of Zero Hour, Amy McDonnell, said:



“The Climate and Nature Bill tackles the environmental emergency by introducing an integrated plan to protect our planet for future generations, led by the science.”

“What could be a bigger issue of conscience than whether we save the planet or let it burn up? Keir Starmer needs to make sure MPs get a free vote next week and back the Bill.”

For more information visit: <https://www.zerohour.uk/climate-and-nature-bill/>

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Zero Hour

- [Zero Hour](#) advocates for the Climate and Nature Bill. It aims to address the UK's international climate obligations and protect ecosystems
- The Bill was first developed with members of the successful 'Big Ask' campaign which led to the Climate Change Act 2008, and is now led by a coalition of UK campaigners, world-leading scientists, academics and members of the public
- The Climate and Nature Bill was first introduced to Parliament in September 2020. The updated Bill was introduced in the House of Lords in June 2022

About the Climate and Nature Bill

- The [Climate and Nature Bill](#) is guaranteed a five-hour Parliamentary debate during its second reading on 24 January 2025. The Bill is sponsored by Liberal Democrat MP Roz Savage
- The 'CAN' Bill is backed by some 250 Parliamentarians, including Sir Ed Davey, Carla Denyer, and Zac Goldsmith. It enjoys the support of 10,000s of members of the public, more than 1,100 businesses and organisations, as well as 1,000 climate and health experts
- High-profile endorsers include Co-Operative Bank, The Body Shop, Oxfam, Save British Farming, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Ecotricity, The Wildlife Trusts and Triodos Bank

Full text of the letter, to be sent on Monday 13 January 2025

*Rt Hon. Keir Starmer MP
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom*

13 January 2024

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you as representatives of 15 trade unions, with a combined membership of hundreds of thousands of workers, asking you and the Labour Government to support the passage of the [Climate and Nature Bill](#) through Parliament, including at its Second Reading on 24 January 2025.



As you know, the climate-nature crisis is already impacting workers' lives and livelihoods across the UK. Heat stress, flooding, poor air quality, and disruptions to work hours and industry are but a few examples of how this intertwined crisis is affecting the health, wellbeing, job security and productivity of workers across the nations.

As the 2024 Labour manifesto made clear, as well as these immediate problems, the climate-nature crisis is the greatest, long-term, global challenge we face. It is therefore essential that, as part of achieving the international climate and biodiversity obligations that Britain has already agreed to, that Parliament sets the strongest laws to rise to this existential threat; not only for the benefit of our members and for the wider UK workforce, but for all citizens.

This Government, and this Parliament, has a weighty responsibility of both rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and of halting and reversing nature loss, by 2030. But we have more to do to be on track for both—and there is currently no integrated legal framework to ensure this cross-government mission can be achieved—and we also need much more citizen involvement in this process to place workers at the heart of the just transition.

Like the Labour Party itself, we support the Climate and Nature Bill's ambition and objective of delivering a nature-rich just transition to a low-carbon economy, with workers and communities at the centre of the plan.

From jobs, retraining, skills development, local wealth creation, and building national resilience, the benefits of delivering this in an equitable way are vast. For workers; for all citizens; and also for future generations—and for the health of our shared natural world—the Climate and Nature Bill deserves your support.

As you will know, the Bill has been before Parliament since 2020, and was most recently championed by Olivia Blake MP and Alex Sobel MP. It is supported by 255 Parliamentarians, alongside 375 local councils; 1,100 union, charity, NGO and business groups; 1,200 scientists; and almost 60,000 members of the public.

We are at a pivotal juncture for the UK's future, where the decisions of your Government will be crucial.

Will we rise to the greatest challenge, or (as previous Administrations have done) kick the can down the road?

We ask you to support the Climate and Nature Bill, and to allow Labour MPs to vote for the Bill to progress at its second reading vote on 24 January.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Woolley (General Secretary, Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union)

Daniel Kebede (General Secretary, National Education Union)

Jo Grady (General Secretary, University and College Union)

Fran Heathcote (General Secretary, Public & Commercial Services Union)

Paul Day (Director, Pharmacists' Defence Association Union)

David Collingwood (President, Association of Educational Psychologists)

Paul W. Fleming (General Secretary, Equity)

Julie Georgiou (General Secretary, National House Building Council Staff Association)

ZERO HOUR

Steve Gillan (General Secretary, Prison Officers Association)

Zita Holbourne (Co-Chair, Artists Union of England)

Ian Lawrence (General Secretary, National Association of Probation Officers)

Gawain Little (General Secretary, General Federation of Trade Unions)

Brian Linn (General Secretary, Aegis)

John McGowan (General Secretary, Social Workers' Union)

Tahir Latif (Greener Jobs Alliance)