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# Inside**track**

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## The environmental case for staying in the EU

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## Comment

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**The environment community can play a vital role in ensuring that the debate is not just about migration and the economy”**

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It's not great that the biggest decision of our lifetime is being portrayed as a gladiatorial contest between Boris and Dave. No surprise then that many people are already bored by the debate about the EU referendum.

It is a herculean contest, but it is between a future as a buccaneering and largely unconstrained trading nation, and one in which Britain maintains its influence by collaborating with our neighbours. For those of us who see the world through a natural world lens, the interconnectedness of systems is a fundamental truth, so collaboration across national boundaries is critical. This is why the vast majority of environmentalists believe that Britain is greener in the EU. Indeed even the few green minded Brexit campaigners, like Zac Goldsmith, aren't seeking to leave because they think it would be better for Britain's environment, but because they think there would be other political benefits.

This is the first time Green Alliance has taken a position on a national vote in our 37 year history. But, having looked at the track record of the EU, warts and all, our trustees were clear and unanimous. The EU has been a force for good on the environment and the risk of Brexit to our sustainable development mission is exceptionally high. That is why we are working with our network, and using this edition of *Inside Track*, to lay out the case for why we are greener in.

We also have responsibility to think about the morning after the referendum. If we wake up and find that Britain has voted to leave the EU it will be a moment of enormous jeopardy for Britain's environment. We will have to convene the biggest alliance in our history to protect the most important agreements that derive from Europe. The toughest habitats and species laws will disappear, and we will have to strengthen UK legislation and its enforcement. The Climate Change Act will come under assault as an impediment to competitiveness and trade, and agri-environment schemes, which have supported high nature value farming, will be in the firing line. If, as we hope, Britain has voted to stay in, then we have to re-establish the case for the EU being a more effective environmental union, through the circular economy package, and further reforms to agriculture and fisheries policy.

The EU referendum is as big as it gets. The environment community can play a vital role in ensuring that the debate is not just about migration and the economy, but about our ability to collaborate and work together for a greener future.



Matthew Spencer, director



# Too much to lose

**Lord Deben** says being in the EU gives us greater power over what happens to our environment



**B**ritain was once the dirty man of Europe but, of course, we didn't admit it. Our water, our beaches, our recycling, our wildlife protection, even the way we allowed every kind of waste to be thrown into landfill, was all way behind the times. Yet, the official line was always that the UK was doing perfectly well. It was only after we joined the EU that we began to think differently. We saw how effective some of our neighbours had become about recycling and water treatment. We noted that there were real gaps in the protection of migratory birds, in Britain and in the rest of Europe. We began to see that a third of our air pollution was coming from other countries, as much as we were causing it in theirs.

We also saw that this community of nations made it possible to do something about these things. Being together gave us more power and greater sovereignty. On our own, our air would still be polluted, however much we tried to clean it up, because we had no control of air pollution from the rest of Europe. We could only deal with dirty air together. As the world's largest trading bloc we could insist on cleaner factories, safer products, more efficient, cleaner cars and buses. We could clean our air at source.

It did mean greater expense, at least to begin with. People feared our competitiveness would suffer, which was the same argument that 19th century factory owners used against the Factory Acts. Yet,

doing these things together not only made sure we could do them at all, but it didn't distort competition; indeed, it provided the very level playing field on which Margaret Thatcher was so keen.

Nevertheless, as I learned when I was secretary of state for the environment, even though we were within the EU, there was considerable unwillingness in the UK government to make the necessary environmental changes. Without our membership the changes we now take for granted could not have happened. If we had been outside the EU, I don't believe we would have cleaned up our water or our beaches or protected our wildlife to the extent that we have done. Indeed, some of the pressure for Brexit from the right is precisely because people want to rid us of what they see as unnecessary environmental protection.

So it was that Britain ceased to be the dirty man of Europe. We helped form the rules that have improved our environment and made life so much healthier and more pleasant. EU countries have learned from each other and created regimes that all countries could manage and from which all could profit.

These regimes improved the environment in the UK and across mainland Europe, which matters because the environment of Europe is ours too. We are doing together what protects our common environment.

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**We helped form the rules that have improved our environment and made life so much healthier and more pleasant.”**

What if we left the EU? We'd no longer manage these things together and that means we'd probably not do them at all. No longer part of the world's largest trading bloc, we would have very much less clout. Our businesses would be more hard put to achieve favourable trading arrangements and, therefore, would be much less willing to accept environmental restrictions. It has been difficult enough to convince them to up until now, but competition arguments would really have force if we were trying to compete on our own with the EU and the US.

And yet, the EU would still set the rules and we would have no say in them. Britain's burgeoning car industry would be subject to EU pollution rules because that's where so many of its cars are sold, and will continue to be. Those rules would be made without our input, and would favour continental manufacturers. In this instance, Britain has been on the progressive side. With our voice silenced, this crucial means of cleaning up our air and combatting climate change would lose a vital advocate.

It is a two way street. The UK has changed because of our membership but, in changing, we have learned to play a constructive part. Because of the UK, EU regulation is less prescriptive and less invasive, we have persuaded other EU members to care more about animal welfare, we insisted that agricultural support should include environmental goals and we have led on tackling climate change.

Brexit would destroy all this. The UK would no longer have a vote or a voice, we would no longer be able to lead on these important issues. Our influence on climate, animal welfare, and

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**In a Britain shut out of the free trade area, the pressure to relax environmental protection would be immense.”**

environmental farming would be lost. At home we would see the backlash immediately after an out vote. Even the leave campaigners have admitted that agricultural support would be cut by one third. That estimate is optimistic, because without the backing of the continental farming lobbies, a British government of any party would have little appetite to replace the CAP. As an agricultural minister of seven years I've seen just how antagonistic the Treasury is to farming support, which is why I believe George Eustice's Brexit estimate of a one third cut is very optimistic. However, based on this figure, farm incomes would be cut by at least £1 billion and environmentally friendly farming would become a rarity. Farmers would be totally preoccupied by making ends meet and would have to do only what made immediate economic sense.

So, overall, in a Britain shut out of the free trade area, negotiating from a point of weakness new terms of trade with the EU and US, the pressure to relax environmental protection would be immense. Without the support of our European neighbours, the stark economics of the powerless would win out. Many of the battles environmentalists had thought won would have to be refought. Who really believes that the habitats directive or the birds directive, would remain intact in a Britain fighting to make its way without any of the advantages of the European Union?

We have gained so much environmentally from our membership, and we have contributed a great deal to building a better Europe and a better world. The UK should be proud of what we have achieved as a member of the EU. How pathetic it would be to throw it all away in favour of a future with less influence, less certainty, less security and less opportunity to improve our position. The UK still has too much to gain and give to the world as part of the EU, for us to retreat now into the isolation of Brexit.



**Lord Deben is chair of the Committee on Climate Change. He was secretary of state for the environment, 1993-97, and minister for agriculture, fisheries and food, 1989-93**



**Dame Fiona Reynolds**  
**Former director-general of the  
National Trust and chair of Green  
Alliance**

“Many of our greatest achievements come through collaboration, and the EU has enabled some very powerful co-operation on the environment. We need to be part of a bigger community to meet the challenges to the health and quality of our natural environment, which is why I see Brexit as a real risk to all that I value about the countryside and environment of Britain.”



**Tim Yeo**  
**Former chair of the Energy and  
Climate Change Select Committee**

“Cleaner, more efficient vehicle engines is a good example of where progress has accelerated significantly in the last few years as a direct result of EU policy. Setting challenging targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions at EU level ensures that Britain is not alone in recognising the need for more urgent action to tackle climate change. And, at a purely practical level, Londoners would enjoy a healthier environment and longer life expectancy if EU air quality standards were enforced.”

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## Why is staying in the EU best for the UK's environment?



**Dr Helen Phillips**  
**Former CEO of English Nature**

“Nature knows no boundaries so a mechanism for negotiating between nations is essential if we are to continue to improve the health of our environment. The EU provides that and if it didn't exist we'd have to reinvent it.”





**Professor Sir John Lawton CBE FRS**  
Former chair of the RCEP, former  
CEO, NERC

“Never mind what you think of the EU generally, you have to be very careful what you wish for in terms of the impact of Brexit on UK natural habitats and landscapes. UK politics has a tendency to be short term and see the natural environment as an impediment to economic growth, and EU agreements help mitigate this by encouraging us to be more long term in our public policy.”



**Professor Paul Ekins OBE**  
Professor of resources and  
environmental policy, UCL

“Britons have benefited greatly from EU environmental policy, and Britain inside the EU has also been able to shape it. We would lose this ability if we were to leave, while it is very likely that we would still have to follow EU environmental laws if we wished to retain access to the single market. This would effectively reduce UK sovereignty rather than increase it. Paradoxically, perhaps, membership of the EU is an essential condition for the UK to exercise some sovereign influence over the European forces that affect it.”



**Professor Andrew Balmford FRS**  
Professor of conservation science,  
University of Cambridge

“The EU is vital to increasing the UK’s voice in global environmental policy. Individual nations can have limited influence, but working through the EU greatly enhances our potential to tackle transnational issues such as climate change, deforestation and unsustainable wildlife harvesting.”



**Baroness Barbara Young**  
Former chief executive of the  
Environment Agency and RSPB

“Environmental quality, clean air, healthy oceans and rich natural resources can only be secured by collaboration across national boundaries and common EU standards promote new technologies and businesses. Brexit would halt and even reverse four decades of progress.”



**Lord Chris Smith**  
Former chair, environment agency

“It’s vital to recognise that virtually the entire legal protection for our environment here in Britain derives from European safeguards. Our air, water and land are kept clean by European laws. And rightly so, because pollution knows no national boundaries. We ignore these protections at our peril.”





As someone who was there from the beginning, **Stanley Johnson** gives his unique perspective on the birth of European environment policy

**S**oon after the UK joined the then European Economic Community (EEC) on 1 January 1973, I was lucky enough to be appointed as the head of the European Commission's newly created Prevention of Pollution and Nuisances Division. A few weeks earlier, at a summit held in Paris, the heads of state or of government of the six founder members of the EEC (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) had been joined by the leaders of the three new countries (UK, Denmark and Ireland). Amongst other things, they agreed that the EEC should have an environmental policy and they charged the European Commission in Brussels to come forward with detailed proposals.



**During those early years Britain played a full part in the elaboration and execution of European environmental policy."**

I don't think I was particularly well qualified at a technical level for my new job. I certainly wasn't a scientist. I had barely scraped O Level maths. But I was familiar with environmental issues at the policy level. In the sixties, I worked for the World Bank and the United Nations, I served as the first ever environmental officer in the Conservative Research Department in the run up to the 1970 general election.

I was 32 years old when I went to Brussels among the first wave of Brits. I was pleased to be working in a field which, as far as I could see, could only grow in importance. It was a field, moreover, where

the UK already had a track record of achievement. Some of our environmental legislation, such as the Alkali Act, dated back to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 had provided a basis for controlling undesirable development and, following the great smog of 1952, major clean air legislation had been passed.

True, some of our beaches needed improvement. Short outfalls meant that untreated sewage could be washed back on shore. "You don't really go swimming in the sea" the old joke went, "you just go through the motions."

During those early years Britain played a full part in the elaboration and execution of European environmental policy. There were some tremendously tough battles. The UK, for example, was determined to resist common effluent standards for industry. I well remember the fights over water pollution which eventually resulted in a twin track regime where countries which so desired could operate on the basis of water quality objectives rather than emission limits.

In 1979, I was elected to the European Parliament in the first direct elections to that body. As a vice chairman of the European Parliament's Environment Committee, I was in the happy position of being able both to progress the environmental policies and programmes to which the EU was already committed, and to support new initiatives.

The parliament met in Strasbourg once a month. Situated on the once heavily polluted Rhine, Strasbourg was a good place to discuss the commission's proposals for improving water quality. The parliament's president, Madame Simone Veil, was in the chair when I made my maiden speech.



I began reciting Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous poem.

"The River Rhine, as is well known,  
Doth was the city of Cologne.  
But tell me, nymph, what power divine  
Can ever cleanse the river Rhine?"

Madame Veil banged her gavel. "Would the honourable member kindly not address the chair as 'nymph'!" *The Daily Express's* William Hickey column the next day ran a brief item under the heading 'Ode de Cologne'.

Until 1984, the European Parliament's role remained largely advisory. The power of initiative remained firmly with the European Commission. For example, the parliament passed several resolutions inviting the commission to propose a ban on the import of seal products with a view to ending the slaughter of baby seals in the north west Atlantic. But it was only when the pressure of public opinion on this topic rose to fever pitch that the commission eventually proposed a ban which the council in due course adopted. It remains in force to this day.

With the seal cull ban in the bag, I wrote to Brigitte Bardot, a fellow campaigner, suggesting it would be fun to meet for a drink to celebrate. I received the reply 'Madame Bardot ne voit pas la nécessité.' Ouch!

The seals campaign, more than anything else, made me realise that, if you really want to push ahead with European environmental policy (and I did), the best place to do it was – and probably still is – from within the European Commission. Write the rules from the inside, as it were, rather than trying to lobby from without.

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**With the seal cull ban in the bag, I wrote to Brigitte Bardot, a fellow campaigner, suggesting it would be fun to meet for a drink to celebrate.”**

I returned to Brussels in the autumn of 1984 as environmental adviser in the Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment, then known as DG XI. My first job was to draft the commission's proposal for a new multi-year environmental action programme, the previous programme being about to expire.

The commission's Fourth Environmental Action Programme (4EAP) was to cover the period 1987-92. Colleagues sent in ideas from far and wide and the result was a comprehensive document, covering air, water, chemicals, noise etc, including the need for a coherent EU contribution on major international issues, such as ozone depletion, climate change and the transboundary movement of toxic waste.

All draftsmen avail themselves of a kind of carver's privilege. I was no exception. Though the EU had already adopted a directive for the protection of birds, there was no overarching EU instrument directive on the protection of European species and habitats. So I included the following paragraph in the Fourth Environmental Action Programme:

"What essentially is needed is a Community instrument aimed at protecting not just birds but all species of fauna and flora, and not just the habitat of birds but the habitat of wildlife – animals and plants – more generally. Such a comprehensive framework should ensure that, throughout the Community, positive measures are taken to protect all forms of wildlife and their habitat."

I am glad to say that the text adopted by the council in 1986 retained that paragraph word for word.

Even though the British government was not at the time immensely enthusiastic about the new initiative (Nicholas Ridley, then secretary of state for the environment, wanted Brussels bureaucrats put on the 'pest list'), British NGOs rallied to the cause when the time came to draft the detailed text that 4EAP called for. I pay special tribute here to bodies such as the RSPB, the Friends of the Earth, The Wildlife Trusts and Wildlife and Countryside Link.

Out of tiny acorns, mighty oak trees grow. Natura 2000, the network of protected areas, created as a result of the EU's Nature Directives (Birds and Habitats), now covers 18 per cent of the land area on the European Community. It offers a degree of legal protection for key wildlife and landscape sites which would be hard, if not impossible, to replicate if Britain were to pull out of Europe. And the Nature Directives aren't the only important EU environmental measures at risk.

On 6 February, 2016, Environmentalists for Europe (E4E) was launched. Bill Oddie is our patron, Baroness Young and I are co-chairs. The steering committee includes Green Alliance director Matthew Spencer, Caroline Lucas MP, Laura Sandys who is, chair of the European Movement UK, and Lord Deben, chair of the UK's Committee on Climate Change.

On the day of E4E's launch, ours was the leading letter in *The Times*:

"Britain's membership of the EU brings benefits to the environment that would be lost if we were to walk away from Europe. By being 'in' we have improved our beaches, cleaned up the air we breathe, helped to preserve our nature and wildlife and set standards for animal welfare. "We know the EU isn't perfect, but we do know that our country's greatest resource – its environment – is better protected and better preserved for future generations when we remain an active, full partner within Europe."

Whatever the outcome of the referendum, I shall look back at my time in Brussels and Strasbourg, as one of the most interesting and productive periods of my life.



**Stanley Johnson, author and former MEP, has been awarded for his work by Greenpeace, the RSPCA and the RSPB. He received a WWF Leader of the Living Planet Award for his work on the EU Habitats directive. You can read more about his time in Europe in *Stanley, I resume*, published by The Robson Press. For more information about E4E visit [www.environmentalistsforeurope.org](http://www.environmentalistsforeurope.org)**

# A memorable holiday

**Alastair Harper** has never forgotten a visit to the beach with his family when he was a child



**I**t is summer, at some point around 1987. I and my mum and dad are on holiday in Skegness. We sit on the beach, my dad wheezing slightly from the effort of blowing up my new inflatable dinghy, a bargain purchase. We look nervously out to sea.

I am keen to use the dinghy, because I am a small boy. My dad is keen because the dinghy only counts as a bargain if we actually use it. However, neither of us is sure if we really want to go through with it. The sea looks – well – disgusting. Things are clearly floating in it. It is discoloured and dirty. Most of the other holidaymakers are steering clear, preferring the candy floss and amusement rides behind us. But my dad is the grown-up here, and the decision is made. He wades in. I am on board. This may be the most vivid of my early memories: keeping my hands and feet clamped together in the absolute centre of the dinghy to make sure the water can't touch me.

My dad has chosen what looks like the safest stretch of sea, but I'm convinced that everything repulsive I could ever imagine is floating just by the boat. We last about five minutes before my mum makes us come out again.

The sea at Skegness was so dirty because the British government hadn't wanted to clean it. It hadn't bothered to force the water utility or the local council to improve its sewerage systems and stop them polluting the bathing waters on the coast. But, since 1976, someone else had been telling them they should. That was the year the European Community passed the Bathing Water Directive, requiring member states to designate bathing waters and ensure they were sanitary enough for public use.

Although it was an iconic seaside resort, boasting the first ever Butlin's camp, and despite its shore being lined with sellers of

armbands and rubber rings, the government of the day had decided that Skegness was not, in fact, used for bathing. Neither, according to them, were the beaches of Southport, Blackpool or Brighton. The average member state designated around 285 sites following the directive. But, although we were an island surrounded by water, the UK managed to find only 27 bathing waters to designate.

What explains the UK's sustained reluctance to act, over a period during which both Labour and Conservative governments were in power? Simply that, as is so often the case, environmental issues came too far down the list compared to the pressing and urgent needs of day-to-day government. Only a political body at a higher level, constructed to act on more long term issues, could deal with the problem.

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**Only a political body at a higher level, constructed to act on more long term issues, could deal with the problem.”**

Around the time I was clinging tight to my dinghy, the Commission had begun formal proceedings against the UK's non-designation of what were clearly bathing waters. In 1987, to avoid legal action from Brussels, the UK designated 362 further sites. 45 percent of which failed to meet the standards of the Bathing Water Directive.

This led to further legal action from Europe, with the result that, in 1989 and 1990, just under £3 billion was invested in improving our sewage outlets. But, even then, Europe kept up the pressure and, in 1993, won a legal battle that forced the UK to ensure it kept its beaches healthy for people to use.

Eventually, Britain accepted the case. Not having poo, sanitary products and condoms floating in the sea off our favourite beaches was an altogether good thing. The political will to clean up the UK's beaches and waters grew. By 2014 there were 632 designated bathing waters, and 98.9 per cent met the EU's Directive (which had



itself been improved in 2006). The last Bathing Water Profile for Skegness from the Environment Agency gave it an 'excellent' rating.

That's the state of the UK's beaches today. It's what I witnessed last summer as I ran across a perfect, honey-coloured beach into blue water on the west coast of Wales, my own daughter laughing as a wave knocked her down, with my dad strutting into the water behind us. None of us were afraid of what lay in wait.

It's unlikely that leaving the EU would see us return to the dark days of my dinghy experience; the reasons why the government should be legally obliged to keep beaches fit for bathing are now just too obvious to everyone. But we would never have known how much

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**The reasons why the government should be legally obliged to keep beaches fit for bathing are now just too obvious to everyone.”**

better things could be, back in 1987, if we hadn't been part of a political process with the time, scale, scope and ambition to act on it.

It continues today. From tackling cross boundary waste and resource issues to air pollution, there are clear benefits to being involved in a process at the continental, rather than national level; benefits which our own, everyday political processes will never prioritise. The European Union works for the environment because it requires us to take a view of Britain's interests.



**Alastair Harper** is head of politics at Green Alliance





# Weighing up the facts

Academic evidence shows the impact of the EU on our environment, but also how much the UK has influenced EU policy, says **Andrew Jordan**



**T**he referendum is underway and the remain and leave camps have emerged firing heavy broadsides at one another through a fog of claim and counter claim. Between now and 23 June, both sides will seek to unearth facts to buttress their claims that EU membership is either good or bad for voters.

In the opening weeks the debate swung between very abstract topics such as security and sovereignty, and the detailed minutiae of Brussels: red cards, emergency brakes and so on. But, as the campaigns mature, it is evident that voters want to know what EU membership means for them: their careers, their families and their local environments.

What facts and figures can the remain and leave camps deploy to attract the environmental vote?

First of all, they can tell voters how experts in the environmental sector – pro-environmental businesses, charities and NGOs – view the EU. We know that environmentalists disagree about many things, but on the specific matter of Europe, the weight of evidence (carefully documented in 2014's Balance of Competences review) confirms that the sector feels relatively comfortable about EU membership.

Then there is the scientific literature. It is notoriously difficult to quantify the environmental benefits (or costs) of policies, be they

national or European. But the academic evidence demonstrates clearly that action to fulfil EU obligations has been a major factor underpinning the marked improvement in UK environmental quality since the 1980s. This effect is most evident in relation to water quality, landfilling of waste and the protection of natural habitats. EU policies have stimulated enormous environmental infrastructure investments in offshore wind power and the Thames tideway tunnel which will generate a stream of additional environmental benefits for decades to come.



**Action to fulfil EU obligations has been a major factor underpinning the marked improvement in UK environmental quality.”**

Academic evidence also confirms how profound the effect of EU membership has been on UK policy and governance. The style of national policy has shifted markedly. It used to be secretive, reactive and voluntaristic; today it is more open, with fixed timetables for making improvements and explicit legal principles such as precaution



and sustainability. The public has better access to environmental information than it used to. Citizens also enjoy rights under EU law that they can enforce before national courts. And non-state groups can exploit EU laws to hold governments to account.

However, the academic evidence does not support the view that the EU – and the EU alone – has produced these effects. EU-UK relationships have been genuinely two way. The EU has pushed the UK in some areas, pollution control for example, but the UK has decisively shaped EU thinking across many others, such as wildlife protection and climate change.

Studies confirm that membership has been a subtle process of give and take. Every single member state has been forced to adapt to EU requirements, even the most pro-environmental ones such as Germany, Denmark and Austria. No state is entirely happy with every aspect of EU membership and, at some point, they all find themselves out voted on something. But they choose to work together for long term gains such as shared information and greater international influence.

The referendum will eventually turn on how voters weigh the risks and uncertainties associated with remaining or leaving. It should not be too difficult for the remain campaign to convince voters that theirs is the low risk option, because a renegotiated EU

corresponds so strongly with the status quo. By contrast, there is a lot less research on what leaving might look like, be it as an associate member like Norway or as a state completely outside the EU.

In common with general elections, the environment has been largely absent in the referendum debate so far. But, if the environmental sector wants to raise its voice and make its views heard, there is no shortage of reliable facts upon which it can draw.



**Andrew Jordan** is a professor at the Tyndall Centre, University of East Anglia. He is working with Green Alliance and York University to produce an ESRC funded review of academic evidence on the impact of the EU on the environment, launched on 11 April 2016

# Celebrating renewables

**Amy Mount** describes how Green Alliance is changing the debate around renewables



Much of the recent work under our Low Carbon Energy theme has aimed to secure a growing role for renewable energy in the UK's electricity mix. In the short term, the government needs to provide clarity about the level of funding that will be available to the sector during the early 2020s. As Dustin Benton points out on page 18, government support for renewables needs to be large enough to support a level of deployment that keeps the UK on a least cost decarbonisation pathway.

Energy policy decisions are hampered by the often negative way in which

renewables are framed in public and political discourse. Despite this, the reality is that they are persistently popular among people in the UK, with the most recent government survey showing that 78 per cent of the public support them, with only four per cent against. So Green Alliance has set about a series of activities to help shift the terms of the political debate about renewables, and to more clearly demonstrate public support.

Connecting the 'northern powerhouse' story, in the week before the March Budget, we launched a clean energy declaration, signed by over 90 business and community organisations across northern England. Addressed to the chancellor, it explained why 'We want clean energy to power the North'. This was supported by the image of a striking interactive light installation in Manchester's Piccadilly Gardens, which we organised with the climate change charity 10:10. One metre high words 'Keep it Clean' lit up when people held hands to connect the electric current.

And, to provoke ongoing debate about how renewables are already bringing benefits locally across the UK, we have been publicising stories about how renewables are doing regionally and locally, based on a rich dataset commissioned from Regen SW. The Climate Coalition picked some of our facts to highlight during their Valentine's Day 'Show the Love' campaign and we've published the details of renewables league tables for areas around the country which have been celebrated in local media.

We have also launched an interactive website, the *Renewable Energy Locator*, where people can explore how different types of renewable energy are doing in different areas of England and Wales. They can search by postcode, region, county and local authority.

A simple, but widely shared, Green Alliance infographic, produced ahead of the 2016 Budget, made it clear how close we are to renewable energy out competing fossil fuel power, but that unclear signals from the government are holding back investment.

To demonstrate how a strong renewables sector can also offer jobs and industrial benefits we published a report in late 2015 focused on Grimsby. *Growing the UK's coastal economy* identified the importance of stable long term energy policy in establishing the town as the base for a range of multinational companies operating wind farms in the North Sea. It stresses that continuing this success in Grimsby and other coastal towns will depend on clearer energy policy decisions by central government.

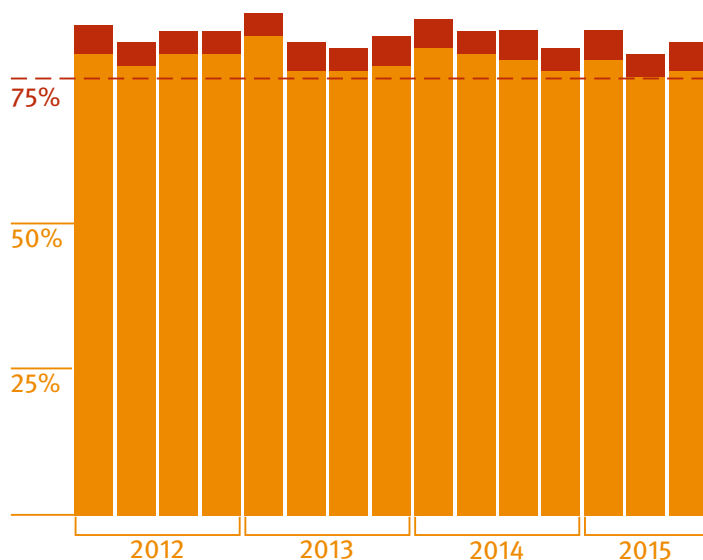
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**Support for renewables has remained above 75 per cent, despite extensive negative media coverage**

■ Oppose  
■ Support





# Greener London

**Frieda Metternich** reports on our initiative with eight other national environmental organisations, to set out 20 actions for the next mayor of London's first term



In May, London is voting for its next mayor. But what will this election mean for the environment and what could the next mayor do to make the city a better, healthier and fairer place to live and work?

Recently, candidates have been trying to out compete each other on tackling London's environmental issues. In part this has been due to a rise in public concern around air pollution, health and transport in the city. Recent research by Kings College has shown that air pollution levels are having a severe impact, with 9,500 Londoners dying prematurely in 2010 alone; 432 cyclists were seriously injured or killed on London's roads in 2014, and there is increasing pressure on the capital's green spaces from development and budget cuts. To help find solutions to these challenges, we worked with eight other leading environmental NGOs, as well

as talking to local groups and individuals based in the capital, to produce *Greener London*, a set of 20 concrete actions for the next mayor that would transform the city by the end of their first term in 2020.

Actions proposed for tackling air pollution include phasing out all diesel black cabs and private hire vehicles by 2020 and having a clean fuel bus fleet by 2018 in central London (and by 2025 across the rest of London); other ideas include giving 100 social housing estates high quality green spaces and making London a world leading solar city. Cyclists would be protected through a ban on unsafe lorries during rush hour. And harmonising the capital's 20 different recycling systems would help move London towards becoming a zero waste city. Our hustings event in March gave mayoral candidates: Zac Goldsmith MP, Sadiq Khan

MP, Caroline Pidgeon, and Sian Berry, the opportunity to debate these and other ideas with over 300 Londoners. After 5 May, we will continue to work with the successful candidate on the necessary actions to make the capital a far greener city.

**Read Greener London at**  
[www.green-alliance.org.uk](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk)

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# Natural partners

The outcome for the UK's natural environment would be better if nature conservation and natural methods were used together, says **Will Andrews Tipper**

The UK's natural environment is in crisis. Species are in decline, important habitats are undergoing fragmentation and deterioration, and important assets such as soil are being lost. Two contrasting schools of thought have emerged regarding how to address these challenges. One is the established approach of conservation, which recognises the intrinsic value of nature and seeks to protect it from the negative impacts of economic activity. The other is the emerging discipline of natural capital thinking, which makes the economic case for nature protection based on valuing the benefits society receives from natural assets such as soil, water and biodiversity. Entrenched differences of opinion about the efficacy and morality of the two

approaches is hindering efforts to identify effective solutions for the future. Our report, *Natural partners: why nature conservation and natural capital approaches should work together*, published in January, set out an aligned approach that would see both approaches work together. It would make use of new tools such as natural capital accounting and market-based policies to support companies in reducing their environmental impacts and investing in natural services. This would work alongside traditional conservation instruments such as regulation, grants and the creation of nature reserves. We argue that aligning the two approaches would increase the total resources available and lead to greater protection and

accelerated restoration of the UK's natural environment. The natural capital approach could drive new business investment to protect and maintain natural systems, with the strongest business case for investment being in protecting or maintaining natural assets like soil and water.

On the other hand, nature conservation will often be the cheapest and most effective way to restore natural systems at the landscape scale, which will be essential given the scale of many of the problems that need tackling.

At an event in January, we debated these ideas with experts and companies, including representatives of the food company Nestlé, the Natural Capital Committee and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. They supported the main conclusions of the report and also highlighted other important issues such as the need for strong accounting tools focused on preserving natural capital stocks, the need for measures to improve collaboration along supply chains and the importance of improving understanding among farmers.

This work is continuing and, later in 2016, we will publish recommendations for a new policy framework that can deliver this aligned approach.

**Visit our website to read *Natural partners: why nature conservation and natural capital approaches should work together***

**Will Andrews Tipper is head of sustainable business  
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# Going circular creates jobs

**Dustin Benton** outlines the results of our new analysis which shows how unemployment in Europe can be cut with circular economy growth

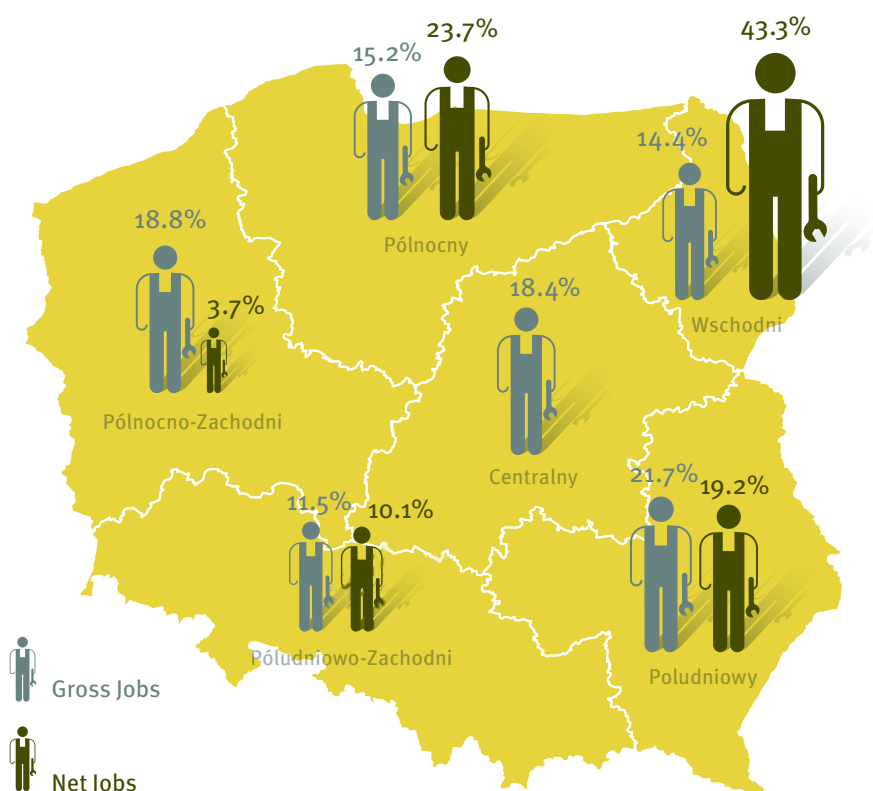
The EU's circular economy package, launched last December, sets out how it plans to help manufacturers increase their resource productivity, boost recycling and cut waste. At their best, these proposals could transform the economy in Britain and the rest of Europe, insulating businesses from resource risks, and decoupling economic growth from material input and environmental impact. It's clear that there's a green upside to the circular economy, but our new analysis shows that there is also a social benefit: new, good quality jobs, which reduce unemployment.

Our work last year, carried out jointly with WRAP, showed that a more developed circular economy could lift 54,000 people out of unemployment across the UK. We extended the research to look at Italy, Poland and Germany. This has shown that, despite differences across the countries, there's a clear labour market benefit to becoming more circular.

Italy's potential is in the bioeconomy. A surplus of biowaste in southern and island regions could be readily sent to anaerobic digestion, creating jobs in areas of persistently high unemployment. Italy is already a leader in bioplastics and is in a strong position to use waste feedstocks. There are a host of new technologies that can extract fine chemicals and pharmaceuticals from waste biomass, potentially opening up an even higher value opportunity for the country. We've estimated 89,000 new, net jobs in Italy as a result of a good circular economy strategy.

Poland would benefit most in recycling and remanufacturing. The country's economy has grown enormously in the past decade. Low wages have made it more competitive, even though overall economic productivity is just two thirds of the EU average. Our research shows that, as Poland becomes wealthier, it can maintain advantage by focusing on resource productivity: remanufacturing products is labour intensive but economically productive,

Distribution of remanufacturing jobs by region in Poland



and recycling rather than landfilling can keep valuable materials in use. For Poland, we found the net effect of better policy could be to bring 27,000 people out of unemployment.

Germany is wealthy, has low unemployment and a large, globally competitive manufacturing base. While increasing recycling is good for the environment and the economy, it is unlikely to be a major factor in lowering German unemployment. But, if manufacturers develop services to increase the use of their high quality goods, such as through shared car schemes, where customers pay for use rather than ownership, new jobs could be created in northern and eastern German cities, where unemployment is highest. Savings in unemployment payments could be very significant, with our study showing

that €177 million in unemployment costs could be saved per year in Chancellor Merkel's constituency alone.

This study was the first contribution to our new European collaboration, the Alliance for Circular Economy Solutions, which is working with think tanks and sustainable business organisations across northern Europe.

**Find out more about the Alliance for Circular Economy Solutions at**  
[www.green-alliance.org.uk/ACES](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk/ACES)

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# Renewables are cheaper than you think

Government accounting makes low carbon power look six times more expensive than it is, says **Dustin Benton**

The UK's power sector has had a rocky year, with a prolonged energy reset and a series of quixotic decisions by government. But, outside Westminster, the fundamentals of the energy system have been changing even faster: wholesale prices have fallen to the point at which even old coal fired power stations can't make money, driven, in part, by the relentless downward march of the cost of renewables. At the same time, new gas fired power stations have risen in price. The result is a quagmire: no new power stations are being built even though everyone agrees they're necessary, because the wholesale price is too low.

The government's solution has been to support the higher cost of new power stations. For gas power stations, support is

paid through the capacity market. For low carbon power, support is paid via contracts for difference. The government has put a cap on low carbon payments, in the form of the levy control framework, saying that payments above the wholesale price amount to a subsidy. But it hasn't capped payments to fossil power stations, and it doesn't regard these as subsidy.

This means there is a six to ten times exaggeration of the amount of subsidy paid to renewables. Using the government's accounting method, the cost of renewables would be £2.2 billion by 2025. But, taking into account the fact that new power plants must be built anyway, and comparing the cost of low carbon power to the cheapest higher carbon technology, the additional

cost of low carbon power would be just £0.33 billion in 2025. This figure is based on current government strategy, which excludes some of the cheapest technologies and won't deliver enough low carbon power.

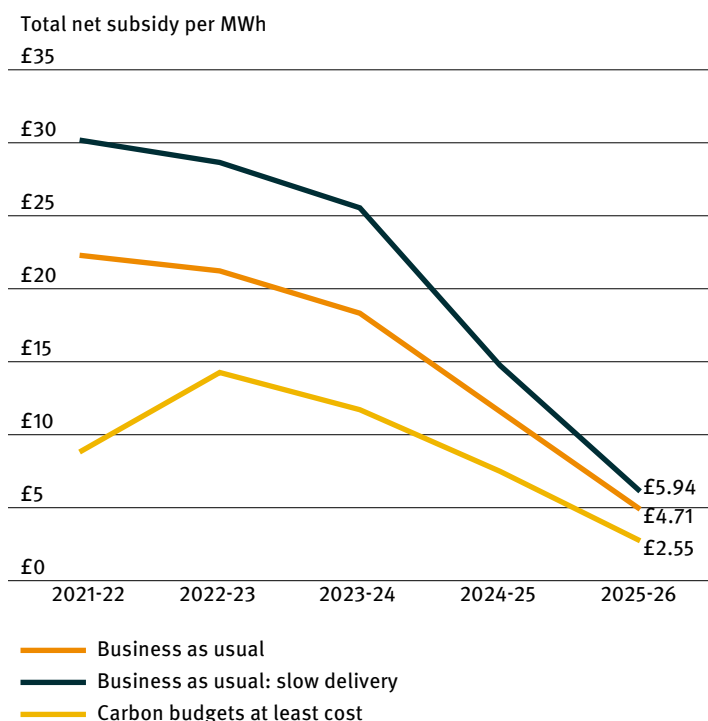
The UK can do better than this: our analysis shows that, if onshore wind, solar and energy efficiency measures were included in the UK's plans, the net subsidy for low carbon power could be reduced to £0.23 billion in 2025. This approach would be cheaper in the short run and would keep the UK on the least cost path to meeting its 2050 decarbonisation goals. We will still need to build a few gas power stations but, with some renewables projected to be cheaper than gas by 2020, it doesn't make sense to exclude low cost low carbon power from the market.

What is needed is a new strategy for the power sector: one that is focused on getting beyond subsidy. Our report shows that a wider mix of renewables and efficiency, and a fairer comparison of costs between low and high carbon power, can make that possible after 2025.

***Beyond subsidy: how the next levy control framework can cut carbon at least cost is available at [www.green-alliance.org.uk](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk)***

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## Change in net low carbon subsidy in the early 2020s



## New European alliance on circular economy

The Alliance for Circular Economy Solutions (ACES) was launched in December 2015. Convened by Green Alliance, this new collaboration of influential British, Belgian, Dutch and German businesses and think tanks is committed to ambitious circular economy policy in Europe.

Its initial focus is to secure a European circular economy package capable of generating new jobs and business models, whilst driving product innovation and secondary raw material use.

Our first contribution to ACES is our report *Unemployment and the circular economy in Europe* (see page 17).



**Simon Wilson** is Green Alliance's senior representative, working in Brussels. He co-ordinates ACES and will contribute his expertise to our European resources programme. A freelance consultant, he has previously worked with multinationals, non-profit organisations, governments and trade associations on communications and public affairs.

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## Blog picks up baton from Inside Track

This is the final edition of *Inside Track*. We will continue to provide regular commentary, expert opinion and stimulating arguments from diverse voices on our blog, which was recently nominated for a UK Blog Award and has more than doubled its readership over the past four years. We will be focusing our resources on further developing the blog as the leading platform for debate on UK environmental policy and politics.

Subscribe to our blog at  
[greenallianceblog.org.uk](http://greenallianceblog.org.uk)

For updates and news about Green Alliance's projects, you can subscribe to our enews at  
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## New members

### Welcome to:

Syed Ahmed  
 Kate Anson  
 Tatiana Biktimirova  
 Rachael Blundell  
 Matt Burling  
 Nicholas Craig  
 Isabelle Edwards  
 David Green  
 Sarah Holloway  
 Cécile Kobryner  
 Danielle Kopecky  
 Colin Le Duc  
 Paul Meins  
 Hazel Phillips  
 Steven Rae  
 Mia Rafalowicz-Campbell  
 India Redrup  
 Ben Tritton



Green Alliance is a charity and independent think tank focused on ambitious leadership for the environment. We have a track record of over 35 years, working with the most influential leaders from the NGO, business, and political communities. Our work generates new thinking and dialogue, and has increased political action and support for environmental solutions in the UK.

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