

Research Briefing

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By Nuala Burnett,
Elena Ares

Climate and Nature Bill 2024-25



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Contributing Authors

Iona Stewart

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Summary

The [Climate and Nature Bill](#) was introduced in the House of Commons on 16 October 2024, and its second reading took place on 24 January 2025.

The ‘CAN’ bill is a [Private Member’s Bill \(PMB\)](#), and was introduced by Roz Savage (Liberal Democrats).

The bill did not progress after discussions between the bill’s sponsors and the government resulted in an agreement. At the end of the debate, a vote was taken for the debate to be adjourned, with 120 for and 7 against. The second reading debate is scheduled to continue on 11 July 2025, but the bill is unlikely to progress any further

Why has the bill been introduced?

The bill aims to ensure that “[policy and action on the climate and nature crises is science-led and people-oriented](#)”. It follows a series of other similar PMBs on this topic from the Green Party and the Labour Party.

The latest was [the Climate and Nature Bill \(2023-24\)](#), a presentation bill which was not timetabled for any debate, introduced by Alex Sobel (Labour).

What would the bill do?

The bill would set the UK new legally binding targets for climate and nature, as well give the Secretary of State a duty to implement a strategy to achieve these targets.

The long title is a Bill to “require the United Kingdom to achieve climate and nature targets; to give the Secretary of State a duty to implement a strategy to achieve those targets; to establish a Climate and Nature Assembly to advise the Secretary of State in creating that strategy; to give duties to the Committee on Climate Change and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee regarding the strategy and targets; and for connected purposes.”

Duty to achieve climate and nature targets

The bill would create a duty for the Secretary of State to ensure that the UK implements and achieves new climate change and nature targets. These targets would:

- require the UK to reduce emissions in line with its nationally determined contribution (NDC) to the achievement of the Paris Agreement, and
- require it to halt and reverse its contribution to the degradation and loss of nature by fulfilling its commitments under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

The bill includes provisions for the devolved administrations to agree to the targets applying to devolved matters.

Joined up strategy

The bill would require the Secretary of State to create and implement a joined-up strategy on both climate change and nature, termed the ‘climate and nature delivery strategy’. This strategy would be created in collaboration with the public through a citizens’ assembly, and would follow ‘fundamental principles’ set out in the bill, including:

- limiting CO₂ emissions to no more than the UK’s NDC,
- reducing CO₂ emissions from imports at the same rate as terrestrial emissions,
- reducing the UK’s emissions from other greenhouse gases at a level consistent with international obligations,
- ending exploration, extraction, export and import of fossil fuels,
- minimising damage to ecosystems and enhancing, restoring and expanding these ecosystems,
- adhering to the [mitigation and conservation hierarchy](#),
- avoiding, restoring or offsetting the international impacts of UK production, consumption and trade, and
- setting out a process for decision-making on energy-projects, favouring community energy projects under 100MW over large scale energy projects.

The bill includes provisions for the devolved administrations to agree to the strategy for devolved matters.

Advisory and monitoring bodies

The bill would give duties to both the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to evaluate, monitor and report on delivery of the targets and strategy. It would also require the CCC and JNCC to consult and work with the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), a public body that holds government to account on environmental matters..

Stakeholder reactions

Many MPs and Members of the House of Lords have expressed broad support for the bill. 191 MPs and 54 Peers have signed up to [support campaign group Zero Hour in delivering the bill](#), and several political parties have endorsed it (Alliance, Green Party, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, the Social Democratic and Labour Party ‘SDLP’).

At second reading of the bill, some MPs criticised the decision not to push the bill to a vote. Roz Savage committed to working with government on the intended outcomes of the bill, and to supporting wider cross-party collaboration on climate and nature.

1 Background

The Climate and Nature ('CAN') bill focuses on both climate change and biodiversity loss.

The bill would require the UK to achieve climate and nature targets, as well as to give the Secretary of State a duty to implement a strategy to achieve these targets. There are already several climate and nature targets set in legislation within the UK. Further detail on these, and supporting strategy publications, is set out below.

Climate change targets

In the UK, the [Climate Change Act 2008](#) is the legislative basis for action on climate change.

[Part 1](#) of the Act sets out the UK's overarching 'carbon budget' which includes a headline target of emissions reductions for 2050. It was amended through [The Climate Change Act 2008 \(2050 Target Amendment\) Order 2019](#) to require the UK to reduce its emissions to ensure that the "net UK carbon account" is 100% lower than the 1990 baseline by 2050. This is referred to as the 'net zero target'.

The UK has committed to net zero by 2050, with interim targets for emissions reductions set out within incremental 'carbon budgets'. These set a "statutory cap on the total greenhouse gas emissions the UK can emit in a five year period", and are set in advance by the government. The latest UK strategy to achieve net zero is set out in the [carbon budget delivery plan](#) (March 2024).

Internationally, the UK is a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) [Paris Agreement](#), which requires parties to reduce emissions globally in line with the ambition of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. Within the Paris Agreement, countries publish Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

1 Nationally Determined Contributions

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are country-level plans to cut emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change. NDCs were designed as part of the “[ratchet mechanism](#)” of the Paris Agreement to maintain and increase ambition, and all countries party to the agreement are required to publish and revise NDCs.

NDCs set out individual domestic commitments in line with the 1.5°C warming threshold. The Paris Agreement requires countries to put forward new NDCs every five years.

Countries are due to prepare their next round of NDCs in 2025, setting ambitious targets for emissions reductions to be achieved by 2035. This will be the third major iteration of the NDCs.¹

At [COP29 in Azerbaijan](#), the government [announced its plans to ratchet the UK NDC to an 81% emissions reduction by 2035](#).

More information on the UK’s targets, policies, plans and progress is set out in the Commons Library research briefing [The UK’s plans and progress to reach net zero by 2050](#) (updated September 2024).

Greenhouse gas emissions

UK greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) are reported by the Office for National Statistics on three bases: territorial, residence (or production) and footprint (or consumption).

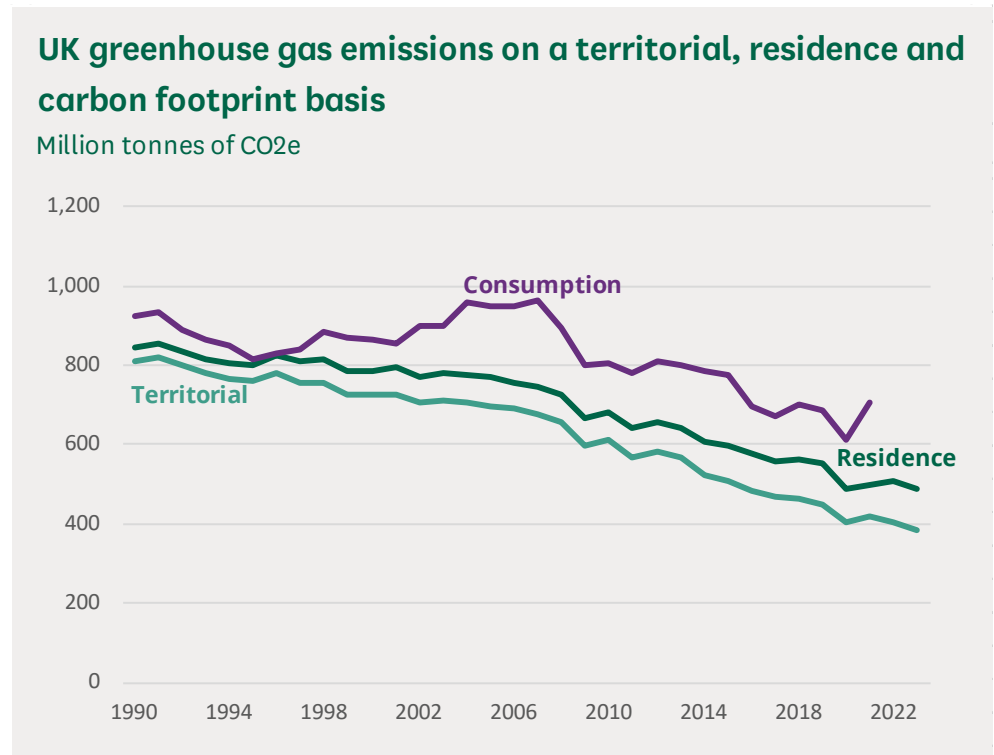
- territorial emissions cover emissions that occur within the UK’s borders and are used to track UK-wide progress towards international and domestic targets, such as net zero emissions by 2050. These exclude international aviation and shipping and the production of goods and services the UK imports from other countries.
- residence (production) emissions are aligned with the [UK National Accounts](#)², enabling emissions to be linked to economic sectors and activity in them. They cover emissions by UK residents and UK-registered businesses, whether they happen in the UK or overseas. These include aviation and shipping from British operators/carriers and UK tourists abroad, but exclude foreign tourists in the UK and freight from foreign operators/carriers.

¹ World Resources Institute, [Next-Generation NDCs: A 5-Point Plan](#), 25 April 2024, [Accessed January 2025]

² UK National Accounts present a full set of economic accounts for the UK. These accounts are compiled by the ONS to record and describe economic activity in the UK.

- footprint (consumption) emissions cover consumption of all goods and services by the UK, sometimes referred to as a "carbon footprint". This includes emissions from UK imports of goods and services and excludes emissions arising from UK-produced goods that are exported. This measure helps to understand the UK's global contribution to greenhouse gas emissions through UK consumption.³

The chart below shows that emissions on all three measures have declined compared to 1990, with consumption emissions falling at a slower rate than both territorial and residence emissions.



Source: ONS, [Measuring UK greenhouse gas emissions](#), Figure 4

In 2021, the latest year which estimates are available for all bases:

- territorial emissions were estimated to be 421 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO₂e) – a 48% reduction since 1990
- residence emissions were estimated to be 500Mt CO₂e – a 41% reduction since 1990
- consumption emissions 705Mt CO₂e in 2021 - a 24% reduction since 1990.

54% (381 Mt CO₂e) of consumption emissions were from imported goods and services, 27% (189 Mt CO₂e) from UK produced goods and services consumed by UK residents, 11% (76 Mt CO₂e) from heating emissions arising from the use

³ ONS, [Measuring UK greenhouse gas emissions](#), 17 October 2024

of fossil fuels and 8% (59 Mt CO₂e) from transport emissions generated directly by UK households.

Nature targets

The [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#), signed at the United Nations [Rio Earth Summit in 1992](#), aims to conserve global biodiversity and ensure it is used sustainably. Global progress in meeting the CBD's aims so far has been limited.

In December 2022 a new agreement, the [Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#), was reached. This set out [goals for 2050](#) and [23 interim targets for 2030](#) for the 196 signatory countries. These include a target of achieving effective conservation and management of at least 30% of land and sea by 2030, usually referred to as '30 by 30'. These targets also include restoring 30% of degraded terrestrial and inland waters, as well as coastal and marine ecosystems. They also include a target of reducing the 'net loss' of the world's most intact ecosystems to zero.

In England, the [Environment Act 2021](#) and [subsequent regulations](#) set legally binding biodiversity targets, which will contribute to meeting international obligations. The targets are:

- to reduce the risk of species going extinct in 2042, compared with 2022.
- to create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats by 2042.
- to ensure overall species abundance is increasing rather than decreasing by 2030, and increases by 10% by 2042, compared with 2030.

The regulations also set out how achievement against the targets will be measured.

The Environment Act 2021 targets are supported by a series of interim targets (to 2028), as set out in the government's 2023 [Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP\)](#).

The [latest annual assessment](#) by the [Office for Environmental Protection](#), the environmental regulator for England, on progress on meeting the EIP's targets was published on 16 January 2025. This concluded that the government was still "largely off track". It found that of 43 environmental targets and commitments, the government is largely on track to achieve 9, partially on track to achieve 12 and largely off track to achieve 20. It concluded that:

while there have been some areas of improvement, very substantial challenges remain with less progress being made overall compared to the previous 12

months. Government is still largely off track to achieve obligations endorsed by Parliament to significantly improve the natural environment. ⁴

It also warned that “unless things change materially, key targets, such as the 30 by 30 target for land and sea will not be met”.⁵ The EIP is currently [under review by the government](#), with an update expected in 2025.

Joined up action on climate and nature

Nature and climate are cross cutting issues with responsibilities falling across departments. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) is responsible for leading UK Government work on climate change, while the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is responsible for leading work on nature and biodiversity.

The government published its [2030 Strategic Framework for international climate and nature action](#), which intends to address these challenges in a joined up way. It has three core ambitions:

- keep 1.5°C alive by halving global emissions
- build resilience to current and future climate impacts
- halt and reverse biodiversity loss.⁶

The [2023 Environment Improvement Plan](#) for England sets out the 10 goals of the government aimed at helping “the natural world regain and retain good health”, several of which are cross cutting issues for both climate and nature:

Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife

Goal 2: Clean air

Goal 3: Clean and plentiful water

Goal 4: Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides

Goal 5: Maximise our resources, minimise our waste

Goal 6: Using resources from nature sustainably

Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change

Goal 8: Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards

Goal 9: Enhancing biosecurity

Goal 10: Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.⁷

⁴ Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), [This Government has the chance to get on track to meet legal environmental commitments – but the window of opportunity is closing fast warns OEP](#), 16 January 2025

⁵ OEP, [This Government has the chance to get on track to meet legal environmental commitments – but the window of opportunity is closing fast warns OEP](#), 16 January 2025

⁶ HMG, [2030 Strategic framework for international climate and nature action](#), 30 March 2023

⁷ Defra, [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023: Executive summary](#), updated 7 February 2023, [Accessed JJanuary2025]

At the national scale, think tanks such as the Institute for Government argue that a [lack of policy coherence and join up between departments](#) has undermined progress on climate change and nature.⁸

One of the eight key recommendations in the [OEP's 2025 assessment report](#) was on the work of departments, recommending that the government:

Harness the support needed to achieve ambitions by showing leadership at the highest level across government departments and directly linking the [Environmental Principles Policy Statement](#) to statutory targets and delivery plans.⁹

[The government's response to the OEP's 2024 progress report](#), published 14 January 2025, made a number of references to working across government to deliver its environmental commitments including:

We recognise the importance of having robust delivery plans for how we intend to deliver our Environment Act targets and meet the EIP goals. We plan to set out further delivery information as part of the revised EIP.¹⁰

It also said the revised EIP will set out an overarching framework for delivery and to a review of internal governance for the EIP.

Devolved administrations

In general, collaboration between the four parts of the UK is based on a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) between the UK Government and the devolved administrations on intergovernmental relations. This sets out the principles that support relations between all four administrations, stressing good communication, consultation and cooperation. Additionally, the [Prime Minister and Heads of Devolved Government Council](#) includes a number of interministerial groups.

Most overarching climate and nature targets apply to the whole of the UK, although the four parts may set out different approaches (in part reflective of their different environmental conditions and [emissions profiles](#)).

All parts of the UK must meet net zero by 2050, in line with the target set out in the [Climate Change Act 2008](#). England, Wales and Northern Ireland will reach net zero by 2050, while Scotland has set its own target, and is aiming to

⁸ Institute for Government (IfG), [Passing the net zero test: How to achieve policy coherence on climate change](#) (PDF), May 2022

⁹ OEP, [This Government has the chance to get on track to meet legal environmental commitments – but the window of opportunity is closing fast warns OEP](#), 16 January 2025

¹⁰ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), [Government response to the Office for Environmental Protection's report on progress in improving the natural environment in England from January 2024](#), 14 January 2025

become a net zero economy by 2045.¹¹ In 2020, the [interministerial group for Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change](#) was established to support collaboration across the UK.¹²

Similarly, meeting the UK's international commitment on biodiversity [under the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) is the responsibility of the UK government. However, responsibility for the environment, including biodiversity, is devolved. Co-operation between the four parts of the UK is facilitated through the Joint Nature and Conservation Council (JNCC) and the interministerial group for [Environment Food and Rural Affairs](#).

Scotland

The Scottish Government was an early adopter of action on climate change, and passed its own [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) to require Scottish Ministers to set and report on annual emissions targets. It later passed the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), which sets out its target to become a 'net zero economy' by 2045 (five years earlier than the rest of the UK). Additionally, Scotland has set an interim target of 75% emissions reductions by 2030 through the same legislation.

The most recent strategy is the [Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018 - 2032: Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero](#) (PDF, 2020). This includes a chapter on a 'coordinated approach', including nature-based solutions and links to biodiversity.¹³

The Scottish Government published an [Environment Strategy for Scotland: vision and outcomes](#) in 2020, which included examples of relevant actions and the following vision:

By 2045: By restoring nature and ending Scotland's contribution to climate change, our country is transformed for the better - helping to secure the wellbeing of our people and planet for generations to come.¹⁴

Wales

The Welsh Government [has committed to a net zero target for 2050](#), and an interim target of 63% by 2030 through [The Climate Change \(Interim Emissions Targets\) \(Wales\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021](#).

The Welsh Government is exploring the options for achieving net zero by 2035, and has appointed an independent [Net Zero Challenge Group](#). This group

¹¹ National Audit Office (NAO), [Approaches to achieving net zero across the UK](#).

¹² Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), Welsh Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive, [Communiqués from the Interministerial Group for Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change](#), updated 19 December 2024, [Accessed January 2025]

¹³ Scottish Government, [Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018 - 2032: Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero](#) (PDF), December 2020, see part II.

¹⁴ Scottish Government, [The Environment Strategy for Scotland: Vision and Outcomes](#) (PDF), February 2022

published seven reports in September 2024 on the pathway to net zero by 2035. Its summary report included the following on nature:

Protecting nature – by limiting climate change risks and prioritising nature in our net zero transition through our agricultural support, creating climate and ecologically literate citizens and place-making.¹⁵

The Welsh Government has also [consulted on the implementation of environmental principles, governance and biodiversity targets](#). Following this it announced in July 2024 that it intends to create set out statutory environmental principles that ministers will have to take into account and an environmental governance body, similar to the approach taken in England.

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Executive is committed to meeting the UK wide net zero target, and has set an interim target of 48% emissions reductions by 2030 through the [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#).

[A ministerial statement on climate change](#) on 11 November 2024 set out the Executive's approach, including the creation of a just transition commission.¹⁶

The Northern Ireland Executive published its [first Environmental Improvement Plan](#) in September 2024, as required by the Environment Act 2021. It is also carrying out [a review of environmental governance in Northern Ireland](#).

Relevant advisory bodies

The bill would create duties for the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) regarding the delivery of a new joined-up strategy and achievement of the targets.

Both the CCC and JNCC would also have to consult with the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), alongside other relevant public bodies.

Climate Change Committee

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) is an independent statutory body established with the [Climate Change Act \(2008\)](#). Its purpose is:

To advise the UK and devolved governments on emissions targets, and to report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change.¹⁷

¹⁵ Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group, [Summary report – Wales Net Zero 2035](#), 16 September 2024

¹⁶ Northern Ireland Assembly, [Minister's Oral Statement on Climate Change 11 November 2024](#) (PDF), 11 November 2024

¹⁷ [Climate Change Act 2008](#), Part 2 ; CCC, [About the CCC](#), [Accessed January 2025]

The government's policy progress towards net zero is scrutinised by the CCC, which produces annual progress reports. The most recent is the [Progress in reducing emissions 2024 Report to Parliament](#) (July 2024). The CCC also provides independent advice to government on climate related matters; for example, the CCC [issued advice to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero in relation to the UK's 2035 NDC target](#).

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

The [Joint Nature Conservation Committee \(JNCC\)](#) is a public statutory body that advises the government and devolved administrations on UK and international conservation. It is an executive non-departmental public body.¹⁸ It is made up of representatives from the statutory nature conservation bodies from each devolved administration and independent members appointed by Defra.

[It summarises its current role](#) as providing “robust scientific evidence and advice to help decision makers turn science into action for nature to guide the UK on a sustainable path”. This includes reporting on the UK's progress on meeting its international nature conservation obligations. It also [publishes the annual UK Biodiversity Indicators](#).

Office of Environmental Protection

The [Office for Environmental Protection \(OEP\)](#) is a statutory public body that was created through the Environment Act 2021. Its purpose is to examine the role and work of ministers, government, regulators and public bodies. It also has powers to hold government to account, including through judicial review.

The OEP's remit extends to England and Northern Ireland, and similar bodies are in the process of being created in Scotland and Wales. Its work includes:

- scrutinising the Environmental Improvement Plan and its targets,
- scrutinising environmental law,
- advising government on environmental law,
- enforcing against failures to comply with environmental law.¹⁹

The OEP publishes an [annual review of the government's progress](#) towards legally-binding environment targets, commitments and goals including those set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan, and which includes a focus on the requirement on the government to halt declines in water, air quality and nature.

¹⁸ HMG, [Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#), [Accessed January 2025]; JNCC, [About JNCC | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation](#), [Accessed January 2025]

¹⁹ OEP website, [What we do](#), [Accessed 20 January 2025]

Climate and nature assembly

The bill would also require the UK to establish a ‘climate and nature assembly’ to advise the Secretary of State in drafting a strategy to achieve targets relating to climate change and nature.

A [citizens’ assembly](#) is a group of people who are brought together to learn about and discuss an issue or issues, and reach conclusions about what they think should happen. Governments and parliaments around the world are increasingly using citizens’ assemblies in their work. The assemblies enable decision-makers to understand people’s informed and considered preferences on issues that are complex, controversial, moral or constitutional.²⁰

In 2019, the UK Parliament held a citizens’ assembly on climate change. [Climate Assembly UK](#) was the first UK-wide citizens assembly on climate change. It was commissioned by six House of Commons select committees and published its final report ‘[the path to net zero](#)’ in September 2020. This set out “how a representative sample of the population believe the UK should meet its net zero emissions commitment”, with detailed recommendations across areas such as “how we travel, what we eat and how we use the land, what we buy, heat and energy use in the home, and how we generate our electricity”.²¹

The report from the Climate Assembly recognised the importance of nature conservation and stated, “we strongly support measures that have a positive impact on biodiversity and wildlife, whilst also helping the UK move towards its net zero goal”. Co-benefits of actions that would benefit both the climate and nature were discussed, and nature-based solutions were discussed in relation to specific issues (for example, forest management or policy options for reducing emissions).²²

There have been other similar assemblies in the UK and Ireland:

- 2022/23 citizens assembly run by the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) on [biodiversity loss](#).²³
- 2019/20 citizens assembly run by the Scottish Government focused on ‘[the future of Scotland](#)’.²⁴

²⁰ UK Parliament, [About citizens’ assemblies](#). [Accessed January 2025]

²¹ UK Parliament, [Climate Assembly UK](#), [Accessed January 2025]; Climate Assembly UK, [The path to net zero](#), September 2020

²² Climate Assembly UK, [The path to net zero](#), September 2020

²³ Citizens Assembly IE, [Chair of the Citizens’ Assembly on Biodiversity Loss, Dr Aoibhinn Ní Shúilleabháin, welcomes the Government’s response to the Citizens’ Assembly recommendations](#), 1 November 2024

²⁴ Scottish Government, [Executive Summary - Citizens’ Assembly of Scotland: research report](#), 25 January 2022

- 2018 citizens assembly run by two select committees on the [funding for adult social care](#) in England.²⁵
- 2016/17 [citizens assembly](#) run by the Oireachtas on whether or not to repeal the eight amendment to the Irish constitution and legalise abortion in Ireland.²⁶

Future generations and a just transition

The bill would require any climate and nature strategy to take into account the wellbeing of future generations and to provide financial support for those who are affected by any measures. It specifically mentions industries with high emissions and with high impacts on ecosystems. This is not something currently set out in existing legislation in England, for example the [Climate Change Act 2008](#) does not mention a just transition.

The concept of a ‘just transition’ applies to the process of transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to net zero. The [London School of Economics and Political Science \(LSE\) explains](#) that the impacts of climate change on people are uneven and so are the impacts of attempts to mitigate carbon emissions:

The just transition seeks to centre the interests of those that are most affected by the low-carbon transition, including workers, vulnerable communities, suppliers of goods and services, specifically small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and consumers. This approach strongly advocates the inclusion of these stakeholders in shaping the net zero transition so that no one is ‘left behind’.²⁷

The devolved administrations have all put policies forward on a just transition with the aim of addressing these issues.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The aim of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) is to ensure that public bodies and other organisations work in a way that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As set out in government guidance:

The Act provides for better decision-making by ensuring that those public bodies take account of the long-term, help to prevent problems occurring or

²⁵ HoC and Involve, [Citizens' Assembly on Social Care](#) (PDF), June 2018

²⁶ This citizens assembly included other topics, as well as the discussion of the eight amendment; Citizens Assembly IE, [2016-2018 Citizens' Assembly | Citizens' Assembly](#), [Accessed January 2025]; Electoral Reform, [The Irish abortion referendum: How a Citizens' Assembly helped to break years of political deadlock](#), 29 May 2018

²⁷ LSE, [What is the just transition and what does it mean for climate action?](#), 20 February 2024

getting worse, take an integrated and collaborative approach, and considers and involves people of all ages.²⁸

The framework for delivery includes [many environmental goals and milestones](#) across government related to climate change and biodiversity.

Just Transition

As a result of the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), the Scottish Government created a [Just Transition Commission](#). The Commission is an independent advisory body that provides scrutiny and advice on how to deliver a just transition to a low carbon economy in Scotland. Following advice from the Commission the Scottish Government published [A Just Transition - A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Scottish Government response](#) in September 2021 setting out its long-term vision and details of a National Just Transition Framework.

The Welsh Government set out its commitment to a just transition in its [second carbon budget](#) in 2021. It launched a consultation on a just transition framework in December 2022 stating that “the Just Transition Framework sets out set out the Welsh Government’s strategic policy approach to achieving a just transition, underpinned by the Well-being of Future Generations Act.” The [consultation response](#) was published in March 2024.

The [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#) required the Assembly in Northern Ireland to put in place a Just Transition Commission. It [launched a consultation](#) on this in November 2024. The aim of the Assembly is to ensure that “as we transition to a low carbon society and economy that we do so in a way which is fair and just and does not leave anyone behind.”

Previous similar bills

This bill is pre-dated by a series of similar private members’ bills (PMBs) focused on climate and nature, although the title of the bills has differed. All were introduced as presentation bills. A presentation bill is unlikely to become law but is a way of drawing attention to an issue and requires a change in the law. It is not debated in Parliament and does not progress beyond first reading.

The [Climate and Ecology Bill](#) was introduced by Caroline Lucas (Green Party) as a presentation bill in the 2019/2020. Its long title was:

A Bill to require the Prime Minister to achieve climate and ecology objectives; to give the Secretary of State a duty to create and implement a strategy to achieve those objectives; to establish a Citizens’ Assembly to work with the Secretary of State in creating that strategy; to give duties to the Committee on

²⁸ Welsh Government, [Shared Purpose: Shared Future Statutory guidance on the Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), July 2024

Climate Change regarding the objectives and strategy; and for connected purposes.²⁹

This is similar to the long title of Roz Savage’s current bill. The full text of Caroline Lucas’ [Climate and Ecology Bill](#) is available on the parliamentary bill page (PDF), and an [explainer as to the purpose of that Bill](#) was set out on Caroline Lucas’ Green Party webpage. This bill was [subsequently reintroduced](#), subject to minor modifications in the 2021/22 parliamentary session by Caroline Lucas.

In the 2022/23 parliamentary session, Olivia Blake (Labour) introduced the [Climate and Ecology \(No. 2\) Bill](#) as a presentation bill. When Olivia Blake introduced the bill, she welcomed the support of the Labour Party in “backing the ‘ambition and objectives’ of the CAN Bill”.³⁰

In the 2023/24 parliamentary session, Alex Sobel (Labour) introduced the [Climate and Nature Bill](#). The long title remained the same, and a [copy of the Bill text](#) is published on the Parliamentary bill page (PDF). When Alex Sobel introduced the bill, he noted cross party support.³¹

²⁹ [Climate and Ecology Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#), [Accessed January 2025]

³⁰ Zero Hour, [“I’m delighted that Labour supports the CAN Bill’s ambition & objectives!”](#), 16 May 2023, updated 26 March 2024

³¹ Zero Hour, [Yes we CAN! Alex Sobel MP leads a cross party effort to introduce the newly-named Climate and Nature \(CAN\) Bill](#), 21 March 2024, updated 22 March 2024

2

The Climate and Nature Bill

Roz Savage's [Climate and Nature Bill](#) was introduced to the Commons on 16 October 2024. **Its second reading took place on 24 January 2025.**

Its long title is “a Bill to require the United Kingdom to achieve climate and nature targets; to give the Secretary of State a duty to implement a strategy to achieve those targets; to establish a Climate and Nature Assembly to advise the Secretary of State in creating that strategy; to give duties to the Committee on Climate Change and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee regarding the strategy and targets; and for connected purposes.”

If the bill has sufficient support, it can progress to committee stage and beyond, but it is unlikely to become law without government support (see box 2, below).

2 Private Members' bills

Any MP, who is not a Minister, can introduce a [private member's bill \(PMB\)](#). They can be about any topic, but the main purpose cannot be to create a new tax or increase government spending. More information on PMBs is [set out in the MPs guide to procedure](#).

An MP can introduce a PMB in the House of Commons in one of three ways: the ten minute rule bill, presentation bill, or the ballot.

- Ten minute rule bills are an opportunity for MPs to voice an opinion on a subject or an aspect of existing legislation. They can make speeches of no more than 10 minutes.
- Presentation bills can be introduced by any MP as long as they have previously given notice of their intention to do so. Presentation bills may only be applied for once the ballot bills have been presented to the House.
- Ballot bills are drawn from a ballot of all MPs interested in applying for a bill. There are 13 days set aside for PMBs in each session, and if an MP is successful in the ballot, then they and 19 others will present their bills on the fifth Wednesday. Bills must pass through the usual bill stages. On the last of the 13 days allocated for PMBs, all the remaining bills are listed on the Order Paper. The first will be debated, but most of the others are likely not to be. Those not agreed that day all expire, meaning that they

will not become law. The first seven ballot bills are most likely to get a full day's debate.

A minority of PMBs become law but, by creating publicity around an issue, PMBs may also affect legislation indirectly.³²

For more information on the procedure for PMBs, see the Commons Library briefing [Private Members' Bills](#) (November 2024).

The bill received broad support from a range of MPs and Members of the House of Lords, as well as campaigning organisations. [Zero Hour, the group campaigning for the legislation](#), note that supporters of their campaign include MPs, Peers, Mayors, political parties (the bill has been endorsed by the Liberal Democrat Party, Green Party, and Plaid Cymru), councils, scientists, faith leaders and wider non-governmental organisations.³³

The [Climate and Nature Bill 2024-25](#) proposes measures to require the UK to meet climate and nature targets, and to create a joint strategy for climate and nature.

Extent and application

The bill applies to the UK. Both the targets and strategy that it proposes would require consent and legislation from the devolved administrations.

Clauses

This section explains the clauses in the current version of the bill, as introduced in the Commons.

Clause 1: Duty of Secretary of State: Climate and nature targets

Clause 1 would give the Secretary of State a duty to achieve two main objectives, termed 'the climate target' and 'the nature target'.

³² UK Parliament, [Private Members' bills](#). [Accessed January 2025]

³³ Zero Hour, [Our Supporters](#), [Accessed January 2025]

The climate target

The target set out in subsection (2) would require that the UK reduces its overall contribution to net zero greenhouse gas emissions at a rate consistent with:

- achieving its nationally determined contribution (NDC) emissions reductions targets, as set under the [Paris Agreement](#), and
- fulfilling its obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, considering the UK and other countries’ “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities”.

In November 2024, the independent Climate Action Tracker (CAT) assessed that the UK’s policy approach and NDC was [not consistent with a 1.5°C world](#) following assessment from the CCC that the UK was [off-track to meet its interim targets](#). However, in December 2024 [the UK announced a new NDC of 81% emissions reductions by 2030](#), which both the CCC and CAT said would be consistent with limiting warming to below 1.5°C.³⁴

The existing target and legislation does not reference [common but differentiated responsibilities](#) (CBDR, a principle formalised in international environmental law).³⁵ CBDR refers to the principle that all states are responsible for addressing environmental damage, yet not equally so; differing levels of economic development are linked to states’ contributions and abilities to address this damage. It is often linked to discussions of equity, as states with greater levels of economic development may historically have used more natural resources in industrialisation.³⁶

The CAT assesses that the UK’s ‘fair share contribution’ towards emissions reduction would require these to go further than the current national plans. It notes that “if all countries followed the UK’s current approach, warming [by 2050] would reach up to 3°C”.³⁷

The nature target

The target set out in subsection (3) would require that the UK “halts and reverses its overall contribution to the degradation and loss of nature”, both nationally and internationally, by:

- increasing the health, abundance, diversity and resilience of species, populations, habitats and ecosystems, as part of fulfilling its obligations under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its protocols,

³⁴ CCC, [Progress in reducing emissions 2024 Report to Parliament](#), 18 July 2024; Climate Action Tracker (CAT), [United Kingdom | Climate Action Tracker](#), updated November 2024, [accessed January 2025], HC WS 624 [on [The UK’s new Nationally Determined Contribution \(NDC\)](#)], 7 December 2024

³⁵ CBDR was formalised at the 1992 United National Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which also formed the UNFCCC

³⁶ Britannica, [Common but differentiated responsibilities \(CBDR\)](#), [accessed January 2025]

³⁷ CAT, [United Kingdom | Climate Action Tracker](#), updated November 2024, [accessed January 2025]

specifically commitments set out in the [Leader's Pledge for Nature](#), and the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)), and

- following the principle of CBDR.³⁸

The new target would create an explicit requirement in UK legislation to meet the targets set out in the CBD which is goes beyond current commitments. [Current legally biodiversity targets in England under the Environment Act 2021](#) have been set with the aim of helping the UK meet its international obligations, but these targets not explicitly linked to the international obligations in law. Setting targets in other parts of the UK would be a matter for the devolved administrations.

Clause 2: Duty of Secretary of State: Climate and nature strategy

Clause 2 would give the Secretary of State a duty to publish and lay before Parliament a strategy to achieve the objectives set out in clause 1, within 18 months of the bill becoming an Act. This is referred to as the 'climate and nature delivery strategy'.

Clause 2 specifies several further requirements of the strategy, notably that:

- the actions set out in the strategy are complementary,
- it should include annual interim targets consistent with the objectives set out in clause 1 (the climate and nature targets), and the Secretary of State must take all reasonable steps to meet these,
- it should require the Secretary of State and other Ministers of the Crown to collaborate with one another,
- it may include matters of devolved legislative competence,
- it should seek to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions (and those of imports) as far and as rapidly as possible, and
- it should (in the opinion of the Secretary of State) be projected to have an overall positive impact on local communities with a high deprivation rating, young people, and those with protected characteristics, and on "the wellbeing of future generations", as well as including financial support and retraining for those whose livelihoods will be affected, such those transitioning out of industries with high emissions or high impacts on ecosystems (often referred to as '[just transition](#)').

It also sets out that the strategy should include specific measures to achieve the objectives in clause 1, through:

³⁸ UNCBD, [Leaders' Pledge for Nature | Convention on Biological Diversity](#), 25 September 2020; UNCBD, [15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (PDF), 19 December 2022

- limiting the UK’s total emissions of CO₂ to no more than the levels committed to in its NDC,
- reducing CO₂ emissions from imports at the same rate as the NDC emissions reduction rate,
- reducing the UK’s emissions from other non CO₂ greenhouse gases at a level consistent with the Paris Agreement and the Global Methane Pledge,
- ensuring “the end of the exploration, extraction, export and import of fossil fuels by the United Kingdom as rapidly as possible”,
- ensuring that steps under the strategy minimise damage to ecosystems, food and water availability, and human health,
- enhancing, restoring and expanding natural ecosystems,
- adherence to the Oxford University Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science (ICCS) [mitigation and conservation hierarchy](#),
- avoiding, restore or offset international impacts of UK production, consumption and trade, and
- setting out a process for decision making in relation to energy-projects with ‘a view to achieving the objectives’, specifically
 - a presumption in favour of community energy projects up to 100MW, and
 - a presumption against large scale energy projects over 100MW unless local residents have been consulted and expressed support.

Finally, it sets out that the Secretary of State must consult the CCC, JNCCC, OEP and such other persons that they consider appropriate.

Clause 3: Establishment of a Climate and Nature Assembly

Clause 3 would require the Secretary of State to procure an independent expert body to establish a citizens’ assembly on climate and nature within six months of the bill becoming an Act.

This assembly would then consider expert advice and publish its outcomes.

The CCC and the JNCC would then review the assembly’s recommendations and publish a joint proposal for measures to be included in the strategy (detailed in clause 2). If an assembly recommendation were to receive 66% or more support from citizens’ and support from the CCC and JNCC members,

then it must be included within the strategy (although the Secretary of State would retain a final veto).

Clause 4: Duties of the Committee on Climate Change and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Clause 4 would require the CCC and the JNCC to evaluate, monitor and report annually on the implementation of the strategy and targets, as well as fulfil the duties set out in clauses 3 and 6.

In fulfilling these duties, clause 4 would require the CCC and JNCC to consult and work with the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) and any other public body which appears to them to be relevant.

It would also require the CCC to recommend annual emissions budgets for each greenhouse gas for the UK, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (at present, the CCC provides advice on the UK's carbon budgets, but these are set over five year budgetary periods).³⁹

Clause 5: Approval by devolved legislations

Clause 5 sets out the process for ensuring the measures set out in within the bill obtain approval by devolved legislatures. This includes information about the requirements for approval of the targets (as set out in clause 1) and the strategy (as set out in clause 2).

Clause 6: Acceptance and implementation of the strategy and any revisions

Clause 6 sets out the process required for the strategy to be implemented. It would require the Secretary of State to lay the strategy before the House of Commons and be approved.

It would also require the Secretary of State to report annually to Parliament on the implementation of the strategy and progress made towards the targets. It specifies that this report should use metrics covering a range of specific biodiversity measures, and that this report should include an assessment of how likely it is that the objectives of the bill will be achieved (based on opinions from the CCC, JNCC, and OEP).

Clause 6 also sets out that if the measures in the strategy or interim targets are found unlikely to achieve the objectives of the bill (based on up-to-date scientific evidence, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, CCC, JNCC, OEP, or expressed by resolution in the Commons), then the Secretary of State would be required to revise the strategy or explain to the Commons in a

³⁹ For more information on the existing approach to carbon budgets, see section 1.2 of the Commons Library research briefing, CBP 9888, [The UK's plans and progress to reach net zero by 2050](#)

statement why a revision is not necessary. This review would take place one year after publication of the strategy, and then at annual intervals.

Clause 7: Financial provisions

Clause 7 sets out that this bill would not require additional financial provision within this Parliament.

Clause 8: Interpretation

Clause 8 sets out clarification for technical terms used within the bill, including what falls within the scope of ‘territorial emissions’, as well as definitions for ‘nature’ and ‘ecosystems’.

Clause 9: Extent, commencement and short title

Clause 9 sets out that that the bill would apply to all parts of the UK, and that it would come into force on the day that it is passed.

3

Consideration of the bill

First reading of Roz Savage's [Climate and Nature Bill](#) in the House of Commons took place on 16 October 2024, along with the other PMB ballot bills.

Second Reading

Second reading of the bill took place on 24 January 2025. Roz Savage opened the debate, and Mary Creagh (the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) responded on behalf of the government.⁴⁰

The case for the bill

Roz Savage set out the reasons for introducing the bill. It aims to address “the most important existential challenge of our generation: the intertwined climate and nature crises”. She noted that it was “four years in the making” and was preceded by previous presentation bills and debates, and thanked a range of MPs, scientists and campaigners who had worked on other iterations.

She also highlighted that the government had signed up to various international commitments on both climate and nature, but that work needs to be done to close the ambition gap and deliver action in these areas. She set out the scope and remit of the bill (see section 2), emphasising its importance in joining up action between climate and nature.⁴¹ The bill would create “a joined-up strategy for the UK to tackle the interconnected climate and nature crises together”. She summarised the bill’s provision as follows:

The CAN Bill would enshrine international commitments made by the UK into national legislation to cut emissions and to restore nature by 2030, as outlined in the global biodiversity framework. The Bill would bring the UK public along with that agenda via a climate and nature Toggle showing location of assembly, which is key to ensuring that all voices from across our country are heard, enabling workers to transition to low-carbon jobs and ensuring vulnerable communities are protected. It provides for a fair and just transition that does not come at the expense of the rest of the world. For centuries Britain prospered by exploiting resources overseas: animal, vegetable, mineral and human. The Bill requires the accounting for our environmental footprint to be

⁴⁰ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760](#), column 1215; [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760 \(continuation of debate\)](#), column 1284

⁴¹ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760](#), column 1215

honest, taking into account the carbon emissions and impacts on nature that are incurred overseas in producing the goods and services that we enjoy. It is disingenuous to offshore most of our manufacturing, and then congratulate ourselves for having reduced our environmental impact.⁴²

Cross party support

A majority of members who spoke set out their broad support for the bill and its intentions, with many referencing future generations and local constituency habitats in their speeches.

Sir Roger Gale (Con) who co-sponsored the Bill spoke in favour of it although he referred to it as “deeply flawed in places” and said it would need amending. However, he concluded “we are about to become—if we do not listen today—the authors of our own demise, and that is why I believe that the Bill deserves, at the very least, a Second Reading”.⁴³

Barry Gardiner (Lab) spoke in support of the bill and reflected on the level of cross-party support. He also highlighted areas where the bill would need further scrutiny.⁴⁴

Nadia Whittone (Lab) also co-sponsored the Bill referred to the discussions with the government on the Bill and her unwillingness to put the debate to a vote:

We are now working towards getting the concessions from the Government they have already committed to, holding them to account, pushing them to go further, and taking action up to and beyond what this Bill asks for.

I do not want to sacrifice the transitional demands that we have won as a result of pressure in negotiation, not just from MPs—in fact, perhaps we have played the smallest role—but from campaigners, who have been pushing us to push Ministers and the Government. I am not willing to sacrifice the transitional demands that we could win for climate and nature—today, right now—and that we could hold the Government to account on delivering, in order to have a vote that would mean we lose those demands.⁴⁵

Clive Lewis (Lab) set out his support for the bill, and criticised messaging focused on growth. He said:

There is a question for the Government —my Government or any Government—about growth: what kind of growth do we want? No one is answering that question. Do we want sustainable growth? What is growth about? What are we growing? Are we growing pollution in our rivers? Are we growing roads that go through ancient woodlands? Yes, that is growth, but is it the growth we want? Do we not want to see growth in well-paid adult social care or renewable technology? Do we not want to see growth in rewilding or sustainable farming? Those are the areas where I want to see economic growth. I do not want to see growth that comes at the cost of my daughter and

⁴² [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760](#), column 1216

⁴³ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760](#), columns 1227-1229

⁴⁴ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 769](#), column 1239

⁴⁵ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760 \(continuation of debate\)](#), column 1264-1265

her generation's future. That is the kind of decision that we in this country and this Government have to make.⁴⁶

He concluded that “we cannot have growth on a dead planet” and expressed his support for the bill.⁴⁷

Also discussing the concept of economic growth in relation to climate and nature outcomes, Simon Hoare (Con) critiqued the assumption that there has to be a choice between growth and addressing climate change and biodiversity loss, stating that “the definition of growth needs to be reset”.⁴⁸

Carla Denyer (Green) also co-sponsored the bill and set out the Green Party's support for the ambitions of the bill, but criticised the decision to strike a deal with the government to adjourn debate ahead of second reading. Reflecting on the decision not to push the bill to a vote, she said:

I cannot tell you how disappointed I was, and how disappointed millions of people will be, to learn how the Government have behaved. They ignored the CAN Bill campaign for months, only finally agreeing to meet its promoter 10 days before this debate—coming to the negotiation table with almost nothing new, demanding a promise not to push the Bill to a vote in exchange for no regulation, no legislation, no new targets. That is peanuts. After 10 days of negotiation, incredibly, the offers got worse—until, late last night, the best that the Government could offer was a meeting with the Secretary of State, a non-specific offer to work together, and a video.

The climate is why I got into politics and I am not giving up that easily, so I have stood up today to say to the Government, “Please, give us real commitments, binding decisions, legislation, timetables and consequences.” The existing legislation to which the Government are working is based on science that is out of date, taking us back to a time when we thought that 2°C was a safe level of warming. It takes no account of the emissions from products and services that we import, no account of emissions from aviation and shipping, and no account of emissions from other greenhouse gases such as methane. In other words, it chooses not to count the tricky stuff and then slaps itself on the back for doing so jolly well at the easy stuff, and, as we have heard over and over again today, it does not join up climate and nature legislation or policy in any way.⁴⁹

Pippa Heylings (Lib Dem) responded to Carla Denyer “show respect to huge effort” undertaken by Roz Savage in building political momentum for the bill, noting that “she did receive commitments that will enable us to move forward – not at the pace that we want, but together”.⁵⁰

Criticism

Andrew Bowie (Con) criticised the bill, saying that “if it became law, it would damage our country, our prosperity, the lives of individuals and industries

⁴⁶ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760](#), column 1226

⁴⁷ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760](#), column 1226

⁴⁸ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760](#), column 1232

⁴⁹ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760 \(continuation of debate\)](#), column 1262

⁵⁰ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760 \(continuation of debate\)](#), column 1262

across the United Kingdom”. He set out some reasons for his position, including that the bill would require the Secretary of State to be “duty bound to act as directed by an unelected body”, the provision to include a requirement to end exploration and extraction of fossil fuels as part of the strategy (clause 2), and the provision to include a presumption against energy projects of 100MW as part of the strategy (clause 2).⁵¹

This was echoed by Greg Smith (Con) who said that “from a legislative perspective”, the Environment Act 2021 sets out a suitable framework for action.⁵²

Government position and response

Sir Christopher Chope (Con) asked “is it true that the government are intent on kicking the bill into the long grass because they do not want to be seen to be opposing it, yet they do not really support it?” Roz Savage responded that this was not her interpretation of the government’s position and that she had had “some fruitful conversations” with them.⁵³

Responding on behalf of the government, Mary Creagh set out government policy on both biodiversity and climate change, including work to finalise the criteria for land being protected under the 30 by 30 targets, to support a circular economy, and to support biodiversity credit markets.⁵⁴ Speaking about the bill campaign, she said:

Let me compliment the hon. Lady on her work and that of NGOs [non-governmental organisations], academics and partners across the climate and nature space, and on the impressive campaign that they have driven to get a joined-up approach across both policy areas. This will be a great opportunity to discuss the environmental improvement plan review, and to demonstrate that we are taking our targets very seriously.

I can also tell the hon. Lady that we are going to strengthen the relationship between the JNCC, the CCC and the special representatives, because the siloed approach to climate and nature respectively is dividing work, and the work happening at an international level should be reflected here as well. We will look at strengthening data reporting on our consumption emissions, and at narratives concerning the imported emissions to which the Bill refers.⁵⁵

She made a number of commitments that directly address measures in the bill, including to engage with young people and others in designing a plan to deliver environmental improvements. She committed to meeting with the Kerry McCarthy (Minister for Climate) and Roz Savage to discuss how to take forward engagement with non-governmental partners.⁵⁶

⁵¹ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760 \(continuation of debate\)](#), column 1251

⁵² [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760 \(continuation of debate\)](#), column 1271

⁵³ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760](#), column 1219

⁵⁴ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760 \(continuation of debate\)](#), column 1283

⁵⁵ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760 \(continuation of debate\)](#), column 1284

⁵⁶ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760 \(continuation of debate\)](#), columns 1283 - 1284

A vote was taken to adjourn debate on the bill, with 120 for and 7 against.⁵⁷ Debate will be resumed on 11 July 2025, [if there is time](#).

Ministerial statements

Speaking to the [Environmental Audit Committee on 27 January 2025](#), Ed Miliband (Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero) reflected on the Climate and Nature Bill.

He told the committee that Ministers would make annual statements to Parliament (and the public) on the government's assessment of the state of climate and nature, offering information on government action and suggesting how members of the public can contribute emissions reductions and nature recovery.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ [HC Deb 24 January 2025 Vol 760 \(continuation of debate\)](#), column 1285

⁵⁸ Environmental Audit Committee, [Outcomes of UNFCCC COP29](#), 27 January 2025

4

Reaction to the bill

Campaigning and declarations of support

The bill is championed by [campaign group Zero Hour](#), and supported by several high-profile environmental groups, such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and the Wildlife Trusts. In total, over 750 non-governmental organisations have registered their backing for the bill with Zero Hour.⁵⁹

Several political parties have endorsed the bill, specifically Alliance, Green Party, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, and the Social Democratic and Labour Party ‘SDLP’. In total, five different political parties with MPs in Parliament have endorsed the bill, and MPs from all parties have given their individual support. This includes Members of the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd.⁶⁰

The Labour Party has not endorsed the bill. Environmental media organisation Edie has reported that the government will oppose the bill as it does not support all the measures included.⁶¹

More widely, in addition to MPs, over 50 Members of the House of Lords have endorsed the bill and declared support for Zero Hour.⁶²

The Zero Hour campaign is also supported by community leaders across the UK. This includes 32 faith leaders (spanning multiple religions) and six mayors (including Sadiq Khan, Tracy Brabin and Andy Burnham).⁶³ In addition, multiple local authority leaders have also supported the bill,⁶⁴ and a group of union leaders have [written to the Prime Minister calling on the government to support the bill](#).⁶⁵

Scientific support for Zero Hour’s campaign includes Prof Sir Partha Dasgupta (author of the seminal [‘Dasgupta review’ on the economics of biodiversity](#)), Prof Sir David King (previous government Chief Scientific Advisor and special representative for climate change), and Prof Emily Shukburgh (director of

⁵⁹ Zero Hour, [Supporters](#), [Accessed January 2025]

⁶⁰ Zero Hour, [Supporters](#), [Accessed January 2025]

⁶¹ Edie, [Are UK Parties Failing on Climate Crisis Commitment?](#), 8 January 2025

⁶² Zero Hour, [Supporting Peers](#), [Accessed January 2025]

⁶³ Zero Hour, [Supporting Faith Leaders](#), [Accessed January 2025]; Zero Hour, [Supporting Mayors](#), [Accessed January 2025]

⁶⁴ Zero Hour, [Supporting Councils](#), [Accessed January 2025]

⁶⁵ UCU, [Union leaders' request for the UK Government to support the Climate and Nature Bill](#), 15 January 2025, [Accessed January 2025]

Cambridge net zero, the University's research and innovation work focused on climate change).⁶⁶

[Citizens Climate Lobby](#), a non-profit organisation focused on local organising in response to climate change, is also campaigning for support for the Bill.

⁶⁶ Zero Hour, [Supporting Scientists](#), [Accessed January 2025]; HM Treasury, [Final Report - The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review](#), 2 February 2021, updated 20 August 2021; HMG, [Sir David King](#), [Accessed January 2025]; [Cambridge Zero](#), [Accessed January 2025]

5 Further reading

Library publications

- Commons Library research briefing, CBP 9888, [The UK's plans and progress to reach net zero by 2050](#), 26 September 2024
- Commons Library research briefing, CBP 9969, [Climate change adaptation and resilience in the UK](#), 27 March 2024
- Commons Library insight, [Biodiversity loss: The UK's international obligations](#), 11 July 2024
- Commons Library debate pack, [Debate on biodiversity loss](#), 14 May 2024
- Commons Library debate pack, [Climate change and biodiversity](#), 8 February 2023
- Lords Library in focus, [Nature-based solutions for climate change: overview of the Science and Technology Committee report](#), 3 February 2023
- Commons Library debate pack, [Government support for a nature and climate declaration](#), 8 November 2022
- Commons Library legislative briefing, [Climate and Ecology Bill 2019-21](#), 9 February 2021
- Commons Library insight, [Climate Assembly UK](#), 24 November 2020

External reports and media

- The Wildlife Trusts, [UK and Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (PDF), 14 October 2024
- Zero Hour, [Creating a nature-rich UK](#) (PDF), September 2023
- Zero Hour, [Net zero: the ambition gap](#) (PDF), 18 October 2022
- Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL), [Climate and Nature: A Route to Mutual Acceleration](#), 28 September 2022
- Climate Assembly UK, [The path to net zero](#), September 2020

Annex: How private member's bills go through Parliament

This bill has been introduced as a [private member's bill](#) in the House of Commons (meaning it has been introduced by an MP who is not a government minister). It can be amended but the entire text has to be agreed by both Houses before it can receive Royal Assent and become law.

In both Houses, the bill will go through the same stages, although there are slight differences in the practice of the Houses.

Commons stages

A private member's bill (PMB) that is introduced in the House of Commons will go through the following stages.

First reading

The formal introduction of a PMB, when a clerk reads out the name of the bill in the Commons Chamber. First reading of this bill took place on 16 October 2024. There was no debate at this stage. Bills cannot be published before their introduction.

Second reading

PMBs have precedence over government business on 13 Fridays in each session; the first seven of these Fridays are set aside for the second reading of bills (on the remaining Fridays, bills that have made the most progress have precedence to complete their remaining stages).⁶⁷ MPs drawn in the top seven of the ballot therefore have first choice of second reading date and (assuming they each choose a different date) their bills will be first on the Order Paper and will be guaranteed debate:

If you are first MP to name a particular Friday, your bill will be the first one on the Order Paper that day. This means you will potentially have a full day (the 5 hours from 9.30am to 2.30pm on Fridays) to debate your bill at its second reading.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ [Standing Order No. 14\(8\) to \(13\)](#)

⁶⁸ UK Parliament, [MPs' Guide to Procedure: Private Members' Bills in the Chamber](#), accessed 14 January 2025

Roz Savage was drawn third in the ballot and therefore had third choice of sitting Friday.⁶⁹ She named the 24 January 2025 for second reading of her bill. It is listed first on the [Order Paper](#) for that day so will have time for a full debate.⁷⁰

Time limits and closure motions

In order for a PMB to be given a second reading, the debate must have concluded before the ‘[moment of interruption](#)’ at 2.30pm.⁷¹ If the debate is still going at this point, it will be adjourned (without a decision on second reading being taken) and ordered to resume on a future sitting Friday. In practice this means the PMB is unlikely to be debated again and it will not make any further progress.

PMBs on controversial topics face a particular risk of running out of time, either because a large number of MPs wish to speak or MPs opposed to giving the bill a second reading ‘[filibuster](#)’ to run down the clock.

One way to manage the timetable is for the Speaker to impose time limits on speeches using the power in [Standing Order No.47](#).⁷² This power is not usually exercised in PMB proceedings.⁷³

The debate can also be ended if an MP successfully moves a ‘[closure motion](#)’. A successful closure motion at second reading brings the debate to an immediate stop and requires the House to make a decision on whether to give the bill a second reading. A closure motion requires both a simple majority and at least 100 MPs voting in favour of it in order to pass.⁷⁴

Committee stage

If a PMB passes the second reading stage, it will automatically be committed to a public bill committee.⁷⁵

Committee stage for a PMB has some unique features compared to committee stage for a government bill:

- Timing: Committee stage is not timetabled in the way that it would be for a government bill, so there is no limit to how long committee stage can

⁶⁹ UK Parliament, [Private Members' Bill ballot to be drawn on Thursday 5 September](#), 3 September 2024, updated 5 September 2024

⁷⁰ Note that there is in theory the possibility (under [Standing Order No.11\(4\)](#)) of the Speaker interrupting proceedings at 11am to permit urgent questions and certain other matters

⁷¹ [Standing Order No.11\(2\)](#)

⁷² [Standing Order No.47](#)

⁷³ See for example the general observation by the Hansard Society that “it has long been common practice that during PMB proceedings the Chair does not impose any limit” in its guide [Private Members' Bills: What are the legislative stages in the House of Commons?](#), 13 December 2019

⁷⁴ [Standing Order No.37](#)

⁷⁵ Unless a motion is made to commit it to a committee of the whole House: however, Erskine May notes that this procedure is generally only used for PMBs “which are unopposed and of which all the stages are taken without debate” ([paragraph 28.83](#)).

last. However, a PMB that spends a long time in committee may run out of time to complete its remaining stages in the Commons chamber, which can only take place on any remaining sitting Fridays (excluding the first seven sitting Fridays, which are reserved for PMB second reading debates).⁷⁶

- Evidence: A public bill committee scrutinising a government bill will take written evidence from interested parties and spend its initial sittings hearing oral evidence from witnesses. By contrast, a public bill committee scrutinising a PMB is not empowered to call for oral or written evidence unless it is specifically authorised to do so by order of the House.⁷⁷
- Other PMBs: Only one committee on a PMB can be active at a time, unless the government supports the creation of another one (in which case the government must table a motion to this effect). A PMB that spends a long time in committee will therefore block committee consideration of other PMBs, unless the government intervenes to create a second committee.
- Public expenditure: If a PMB would require public expenditure, the committee can only consider the substance of the PMB after a [money resolution](#) (expenditure) has been passed. The government is responsible for bringing forward motions of this type. The Hansard Society think tank notes that if the government “declines to bring a motion forward then this thwarts the progress of a bill”.⁷⁸

Remaining stages

After committee stage, a PMB will then return to the Commons chamber for report stage and third reading. The remaining stages of a PMB can normally only be considered on a sitting Friday (excluding the first seven sitting Fridays, which are reserved for second reading debates). As set out above, this can lead to a PMB running out of time to complete its remaining stages if (for example) it has spent a long time in committee, or if other PMBs are ahead of it in the legislative process.

A PMB can only be debated other than on a Friday if the government agrees to make additional time available.⁷⁹

At the end of report stage and third reading debate, the House decides whether to approve the bill and therefore pass it on to the House of Lords.

⁷⁶ 25 April 2025 would be the first available date for report stage under [current arrangements for sitting Fridays](#)

⁷⁷ [Standing Order No.63 and No.84A](#). Any MP may move a motion for such an order.

⁷⁸ Hansard Society, [Private Members' Bills: What are the legislative stages in the House of Commons?](#), 13 December 2019

⁷⁹ This is because [Standing Order No.14\(1\)](#) states that “government business shall have precedence at every sitting”, unless otherwise specified.

Lords stages

Bills introduced in the Lords go through the same process, completing all stages in the Lords before being sent to the Commons.

The House of Lords respects the Commons' primacy on financial matters and does not usually amend Finance Bills (those that implement the Budget) or money bills.

Members of the House of Lords debate the bill, going through the same stages as in the Commons. Key differences between the two Houses are that in the Lords, committee stage usually takes place on the floor of the House and a bill can be amended at third reading.

Most bills are considered by a committee of the whole House in the House of Lords. Some are referred to the Lords Grand Committee – which all members can attend. However, divisions (votes) are not permitted in the Grand Committee and any amendments made have to be agreed to without a division.

The Lords can also make amendments to a bill. Major points of difference should have been resolved before third reading but amendments to “tidy-up” a bill are permitted.

No party has a majority in the House of Lords and government defeats are not uncommon. For bills that have started in the House of Commons, the Lords is essentially asking MPs to think again about the subject of the amendment.

‘Ping pong’

If the Lords amend a bill that was sent from the Commons, the amendments are returned to the Commons and MPs debate the amendments proposed by the Lords. This is potentially the start of “ping-pong,” a process whereby amendments and messages about the amendments are sent backwards and forwards between the two Houses until agreement is reached.

Once agreement has been reached, the Bill receives Royal Assent, becoming law when both Houses have been notified that Royal Assent has been granted.

Amendments

MPs can submit amendments, via the Public Bill Office (PBO), at three different stages of a bill: committee stage, report stage, and when a bill is returned from the Lords. Once the PBO accepts the amendment, it has been ‘tabled.’ If an MP wants to amend a bill during committee stage but is not a member of the committee, they will need a committee member to ‘move’ it for debate on their behalf.

In order to be debated, the amendment must be selected by the chair. Similar amendments may be grouped for debate to avoid repetition. For committee

stage, selection and grouping is carried out by MPs from the panel of chairs chosen to chair the committee. If there is a Committee of the Whole House, the chair is the Chairman of Ways and Means (the principal Deputy Speaker). For report stage, it is the Speaker.

Amendments might not be selected for debate if they are, for example, outside the scope of a bill, vague, or tabled to the wrong part of a bill. The PBO can advise on whether an amendment is likely to be selected.

Further information on bill procedure

The [MPs' Guide to Procedure](#) has a [section on bills](#).

MPs who have questions about the procedure for bills or want advice on how to amend them should contact the [Public Bill Office](#).

The Library can provide information on the background and potential impact of a bill and of amendments but cannot help MPs with drafting amendments.

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