



King's Speech 2024: Energy security, net zero, environment and agriculture

Author: Edward Scott

Date published: 11 July 2024

This research briefing sets out the Labour Party's commitments covering energy security, net zero, environment and agriculture, drawing on its manifesto and other material in the public domain. It has been written in advance of the King's Speech to help members of the House of Lords prepare for the debate on the speech. It does not constitute official information about the government's intentions or provide a complete list of bills to be announced.

I. Energy security and net zero

One of Labour's "five missions" set out in its manifesto for the 2024 general election was to make the UK "a clean energy superpower".¹ Labour has committed to decarbonising the UK's electricity system by the end of the decade, a step which it said would bring the UK closer to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.² It also said its plans for the clean energy transition would lead to lower household energy bills, deliver energy security and create 650,000 jobs across the UK by 2030.

Labour said it would introduce legislation—referred to in the manifesto as the "Energy Independence Act"—which will "establish the framework" for its energy and climate policies.³ It also said the clean energy transition would be paid for through its 'Green prosperity plan'.⁴ As part of this plan, the government would provide an average of £4.7bn each year during the new parliament to support this transition. Part of this average annual funding would be provided by a time-limited windfall tax on oil and gas companies worth £1.2bn.⁵ The remaining £3.5bn would be provided by government borrowing.

¹ Labour Party, '[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 13.

² As above, pp 13 and 51.

³ As above, p 51.

⁴ As above.

⁵ As above, p 128.





I.1 Great British Energy

The six “first steps for change” in Labour’s manifesto included a commitment to establish Great British Energy (GBE).⁶ Labour said GBE would be a publicly-owned “clean power” company which would “cut bills for good and boost energy security”.⁷ The new company would be headquartered in Scotland and would receive £8.3bn capital investment over the course of the new parliament.⁸ This new company would work with the energy industry to “drive forward investment in clean, home-grown energy production”.⁹ Specifically, Labour said the company would co-invest with the private sector in “leading technologies” and support capital-intensive projects.¹⁰ Labour also said it would support the financial sector in order to make the UK the “green finance capital of the world”.¹¹

Labour also committed to ending the previous government’s de facto ban on new onshore wind production.¹² On 8 July 2024, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves confirmed the new government was introducing a revised ‘National planning policy framework’ which would put onshore wind on the same footing as other forms of energy developments.¹³ Labour’s manifesto stated GBE would co-invest with the private sector in order to double onshore wind, treble solar and quadruple offshore wind power production in the UK by the end of the decade.¹⁴ It also said the government would invest in carbon capture and storage, hydrogen and marine energy (including tidal and wave energy) and increase the UK’s energy storage capacity. In addition to the funding for GBE, Labour said it would invest £1bn in the deployment of carbon capture and storage and £500mn to support the manufacturing of green hydrogen through the planned ‘National wealth fund’.¹⁵ Labour said it would set out further details of how GBE would support local production capacity in a new ‘Local power plan’.¹⁶

⁶ Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 10.

⁷ As above.

⁸ As above, p 53.

⁹ As above.

¹⁰ As above.

¹¹ As above, p 57.

¹² As above, pp 49 and 51.

¹³ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero et al, [‘Policy statement on onshore wind’](#), 8 July 2024.

¹⁴ Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 51.

¹⁵ As above, p 29. Further information on the national wealth fund is provided in the House of Lords Library briefing [‘King’s Speech 2024: Economic affairs, business and trade’](#) (July 2024).

¹⁶ Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, pp 53–4.



I.2 Reaction to Labour's energy policies

During the 2024 general election campaign, the Conservative Party argued Labour's plans to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions would cost "hundreds of billions of pounds" and would result in tax rises.¹⁷ Responding to these claims, Labour said the green prosperity plan would represent £23.7bn of investment over the course of the new parliament and that this plan had been fully costed.¹⁸ It also said the purpose of the green prosperity plan was to act as a catalyst for further private sector investment in renewable energy.

Friends of the Earth has welcomed the commitment in Labour's manifesto to decarbonise the UK energy system by 2030.¹⁹ However, it argued that Labour's spending plans should be further relaxed to increase the amount of funding available for investment in green energy. The Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics and Political Science, commenting prior to the publication of Labour's manifesto, had criticised its decision in January 2024 to scale back its commitment to achieve £28bn annual spending on cutting emissions and building green industries by 2027.²⁰

I.3 Fossil fuels

Labour said in its manifesto that, while North Sea oil and gas production would continue to contribute to the UK's energy mix "for decades to come", its long-term plan was for the UK to transition away from fossil fuels in a "phased and responsible" way.²¹ It said that it would not revoke any existing licenses to drill for oil and gas in the North Sea and would work with the sector to manage the UK's existing fields for the rest of their lifespan. However, it said it would not issue any new licenses to explore new oil and gas fields.

Labour also said it would not grant any new coal mining licenses and would "ban fracking for good".²² Prior to the election, hydraulic fracturing operations, also known as fracking, were subject to an effective moratorium, initially introduced in 2019.²³ This was briefly lifted in

¹⁷ BBC News, '[Retirement tax, net zero, small boats—BBC Verify tests key claims](#)', 26 June 2024.

¹⁸ Financial Times (£), '[Net zero target will cost 'hundreds of billions'. Labour MP says in leaked recording](#)', 26 June 2024.

¹⁹ Friends of the Earth, '[General election 2024 manifestos: Final scores](#)', 24 June 2024.

²⁰ Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, '[Grantham Institute responds to Labour's green prosperity plan](#)', 8 February 2024.

²¹ Labour Party, '[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 52.

²² As above.

²³ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, '[Government ends support for fracking](#)', 2 November 2019.



September 2022 following Liz Truss becoming Prime Minister.²⁴ However, this moratorium was reintroduced by then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in October 2022.²⁵

1.4 UK diplomacy and net zero

Labour said one of its foreign policy objectives would be to establish “co-ordinated global action” to address climate change.²⁶ Specifically, it said in its manifesto it would work with those countries most directly affected by climate change including Pakistan, Bangladesh and Brazil. It also said it would seek to establish a clean power alliance made up of countries that are “at the cutting edge of climate action”.²⁷

2. Electric vehicles

On 20 September 2023, then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced he would push back the planned date for phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans from 2030 to 2035.²⁸ The Labour Party said in its manifesto that it would support the transition to electric vehicles by reestablishing the 2030 deadline for phasing out new cars with internal combustion engines.²⁹ It also said it would support the transition from petrol and diesel vehicles to electric vehicles by accelerating the roll out of electric vehicle charging points and would standardise the information supplied to buyers of second-hand electric vehicles on the conditions of vehicle batteries.³⁰

3. Housing and energy efficiency

Labour said in its manifesto it would improve the energy efficiency of homes in the UK by

²⁴ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, [‘UK government takes next steps to boost domestic energy production’](#), 22 September 2022.

²⁵ House of Commons, [‘Written statement: Business update \(HCWS346\)’](#), 27 October 2022. Further information on the previous government’s policy on fracking is provided in the House of Commons Library briefing [‘Local consent for fracking’](#) (10 November 2022).

²⁶ Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, pp 122–3.

²⁷ As above.

²⁸ Prime Minister’s Office, [‘PM speech on net zero’](#), 20 September 2023.

²⁹ Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 33.

³⁰ Further information on Labour’s transport policy is provided in the House of Lords Library briefing, [‘King’s Speech 2024: Transport’](#) (July 2024).



implementing a warm homes plan.³¹ It said this plan would result in “good skilled jobs for tradespeople in every part of the country”.³² Labour also committed to ensuring all homes in the private sector met minimum energy efficiency standards by 2030.³³

Labour said the warm homes plan would be achieved through financial support from both the public and private sector. It committed to investing £6.6bn of public money over the new parliament and said it would work with the private sector, including banks and building societies, to provide further private finance. As part of the plan, it said households would be able to benefit from grants and low interest loans to improve the insulation of properties. It also said this support could be used for installing solar panels, batteries and low carbon heating for homes.

In addition to the 2030 target for all homes in the private sector to meet the minimum energy efficiency standards, Labour said it would ensure new-build homes are “high quality, well-designed and sustainable”.³⁴ It said its ambition to increase the number of new houses built would be achieved in a way that did not damage the natural environment. Specifically, it said it would “implement solutions to unlock the building of homes affected by nutrient neutrality without weakening environmental protections”.³⁵ Current nutrient neutrality rules require new housing developments in certain areas to prove that they will not increase the amount of nutrient pollution in the water catchment if they are located near protected habitats that are already in an “unfavourable condition”.³⁶

4. Natural environment

Labour said in its manifesto that the UK faced a “nature crisis” accelerated by climate change and argued the UK had become “one of the most nature depleted countries in the world”.³⁷ It committed to tackling pollution in rivers and seas and said it would give regulators the power to block the payment of bonuses to the executives of water companies that fail to

³¹ Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 56.

³² As above.

³³ Information on the current minimum energy efficiency standards for properties in the private sector is provided in the House of Lords Library briefing, [‘Home is where the heat is: Energy efficiency and home insulation’](#) (14 February 2024).

³⁴ Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 39.

³⁵ As above.

³⁶ Natural England, [‘Strategic solutions: Nutrient neutrality’](#), 2 August 2022. Further information on the government’s house building plans is provided in the House of Lords Library briefing [‘King’s Speech 2024: Housing, communities and local government’](#), (July 2024).

³⁷ Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 58.



prevent pollution. It also said it would bring criminal charges against “persistent law breakers”.³⁸

Labour committed to expanding “nature-rich” habitats such as wetlands, peat bogs and forests.³⁹ It also said it would improve access to the natural environment by developing nine new national river walks and three new national forests in England. The manifesto did not include a commitment to introduce a new legal ‘right to roam’ in England. This had been proposed in May 2023 by then Shadow Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Minister Alex Sobel.⁴⁰ The Guardian subsequently reported in October 2023 this policy had been abandoned.⁴¹

The manifesto included a commitment that Labour would take “action to meet [the] Environment Act targets”.⁴² The current legally binding Environment Act 2021 targets were set in December 2022.⁴³ They include halting the decline in species populations in the UK by 2030 and increasing tree and woodland cover to 16.5% of the UK’s total land area by 2050. Labour also said it would improve the ability of central and local government and emergency services to respond to natural emergencies such as flooding and coastal erosion.⁴⁴ Specifically, it said it would work formally with “all stakeholders in the fire and rescue services to inform policy and establish national standards”.⁴⁵

5. Agriculture

Labour said it recognised the importance of food security for the UK and that it would “champion British farming whilst protecting the environment”.⁴⁶ The manifesto included a target for half of all food purchased across the public sector to be locally produced or certified to higher environmental standards. It also said it would introduce a new land-use framework and ensure that the existing support for land owners in England—the

³⁸ Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, p 59. Further information on the regulatory regime for water companies is provided in the House of Lords Library briefing ‘[River pollution and the regulation of private water companies](#)’ (19 February 2024).

³⁹ Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, p 58.

⁴⁰ [HC Hansard, 18 May 2023, col 1011](#).

⁴¹ Guardian, ‘[Labour U-turns on promise of Scottish-style right to roam in England](#)’, 25 October 2023.

⁴² Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, p 58.

⁴³ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, ‘[New legally binding environment targets set out](#)’, 16 December 2022.

⁴⁴ Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, pp 57–8.

⁴⁵ As above, p 58.

⁴⁶ As above, p 59.



‘Environment land management scheme’ (ELMS)—worked “for farmers and nature”.⁴⁷ ELMS was introduced gradually by the previous government, beginning in 2021, as a replacement for the system of financial support established during the UK’s membership of the EU common agricultural policy.⁴⁸ Labour also committed to working with farmers and scientists on measures to eradicate bovine tuberculosis in order to protect livelihoods and “end the ineffective badger cull”.⁴⁹

The National Union of Farmers has welcomed the emphasis in Labour’s manifesto on food security and the commitment on food purchased by the public sector being locally produced.⁵⁰ However, it also said the new government would need to set out further policies to improve business confidence in the farming sector. The CPRE (formerly the Campaign to Protect Rural England) has welcomed the commitment in the manifesto to establish a land-use framework.⁵¹ However, it has called for Labour to set out further details, arguing the manifesto did not include enough information on what this framework would include.⁵²

6. Animal welfare

Labour included the following policies in its manifesto on animal welfare.⁵³ It said it would introduce a ban on trail hunting, the practice of replicating hunting with hounds by following a sent carried by someone on foot or horseback instead of a live animal. It also said it would ban the use of snare traps. The ban on trail hunting was welcomed by the League Against Cruel Sports who argued the practice had been used to bypass the ban on hunting wild animals with dogs introduced by the Hunting Act 2004.⁵⁴ However, the Countryside Alliance has criticised the proposal, arguing trail hunts complied with the existing requirements of the 2004 act and a ban risked destroying “a critical part of the rural community”.⁵⁵ Labour also said it would introduce a ban on the import of hunting trophies, end puppy smuggling and farming and work towards the phasing out of animal testing.

⁴⁷ Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, p 59.

⁴⁸ Further information on the environmental land management scheme is provided in the House of Lords Library briefing, ‘[Environmental land management: Recent changes to the sustainable farming incentive and countryside stewardship schemes](#)’ (18 January 2024).

⁴⁹ Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, p 59.

⁵⁰ National Farmers Union, ‘[New government is ‘reset moment’ for British agriculture](#)’, 5 July 2024.

⁵¹ CPRE, ‘[Labour announces nature and landscapes policies ahead of manifesto launch](#)’, 7 June 2024.

⁵² CPRE, ‘[Labour manifesto: CPRE analysis](#)’, 14 June 2024.

⁵³ Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, p 59.

⁵⁴ League Against Cruel Sports, ‘[League welcomes Labour’s commitment to ban trail hunting](#)’, 13 June 2024.

⁵⁵ Countryside Alliance, ‘[Labour criticised after pledging to end trail hunting](#)’, 10 June 2024.

About the Library

A full list of Lords Library briefings is available on the Library's website.

The Library publishes briefings for all major items of business debated in the House of Lords. The Library also publishes briefings on the House of Lords itself and other subjects that may be of interest to members.

Library briefings are produced for the benefit of Members of the House of Lords. They provide impartial, authoritative, politically balanced information in support of members' parliamentary duties. They are intended as a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in Lords Library briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Disclaimer

The House of Lords or the authors(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice. The House of Lords accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties.

This information is provided subject to the conditions of the Open Parliament Licence.

Authors are available to discuss the contents of the briefings with Members of the House of Lords and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

Any comments on Library briefings should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London SW1A 0PW or emailed to hlresearchservices@parliament.uk.