

Greens call to extend legal protections for wildlife



7 December 2022

- **Call for legal protections for wildlife and habitats in England and Wales comes as COP15 biodiversity summit meets in Montreal**
- **Regeneration of nature should be at the heart of all policy making**

Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay has called on the government to introduce a Rights of Nature Act [1] as scientists, government officials and activists gather for the UN COP15 biodiversity summit in Montreal today [Wednesday, 7 December].

The Act would extend legal protections for wildlife and habitats in England and Wales, and establish an independent Commission for Nature to oversee the Act's enforcement.

Ramsay has also accused the environment secretary, Thérèse Coffey, of arriving "empty handed" at the UN COP15 biodiversity summit in Montreal. He said a Rights of Nature Act is exactly what is needed to demonstrate the UK is genuinely committed to halting and reversing species decline.

Adrian Ramsay said:

"This government stands accused by a wide variety of environmental and conservation groups of an attack on nature [2]. Ministers deny this, but the government is pushing through new laws that will weaken protections for nature and dragging its feet on introducing the promised nature-friendly farming payment scheme.

"Despite the UK being one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, Thérèse Coffey is attending the UN biodiversity summit empty handed.

"There is little confidence in the government meeting its target to halt the decline in species by 2030 [4], and the government appears to have made no progress on its commitment to restore 30% of land for nature by 2030.

"Instead, the pace that we are losing nature continues to accelerate and there is no sign of a reversal in this trend. We face an ecological emergency which poses real threats to human society – to food and water supplies, to clean air, to our ability to adapt to a warming world.

"This is why the Green Party wants to see a Rights of Nature Act [5]. This would provide legal protections for wildlife and habitats in England and

Wales, and be enforced by an independent Commission for Nature. It would also ensure that the regeneration of nature is at the heart of all policy considerations.

“Such an Act would also seek to increase accessibility to nature for all, as this is an important way to improve physical and mental health and general wellbeing.

“If the UK government wants to demonstrate a genuine commitment to halting and reversing species decline, and avoid arriving at future biodiversity summits empty handed, it will show leadership by introducing a Rights of Nature Act.”

Notes

1. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/minsmere/>
2. <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2021/10/23/green-party-backs-a-rights-of-nature-act-to-give-nature-legal-rights/>
3. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/rspb-england-government-national-trust-wildlife-trusts-b2174501.html>
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/28/tories-embarrassingly-poor-nature-targets-2030-labour-says>
5. <https://theecologist.org/2021/nov/01/rights-nature>

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[Time to rebuild housing strategy in wake of axing house building targets, say Greens](#)



6 December 2022

The Green Party has welcomed a decision by ministers to axe arbitrary house building targets [1] and have called for future housing development to be led by affordability, quality and environmental standards.

Green Party spokesperson on Housing and communities, Ellie Chowns, who is also a Cabinet Member on Herefordshire Council, said:

“Councils of all political colours have pushed back against unrealistic top-down housing targets, which have taken decision-making away from local authorities and ignored the views of local people. And where targets have been missed, it has allowed developers to get away with lower quality housing that is less sustainable and less affordable.

“It’s time to rebuild a housing strategy that takes powers away from central government and the giant house builders funnelling money into Tory Party coffers and give councils the power to set their own housing targets to meet the needs of local populations. We need the focus of future development to be on building genuinely affordable housing that is good for local people while helping to tackle the cost of living crisis and the climate emergency.

“We certainly do need thousands more new homes but the priority should be on homes for social rent, built to the highest environmental standards so they dramatically cut energy bills and carbon emissions. We also need to prioritise building on brownfield sites and preserve our precious green spaces which are good for public health and for nature.

“All new housing must also be served by high quality walking and cycling routes and much improved public transport services.”

Notes

1. [Sunak to scrap housebuilding targets after pressure from Tory MPs | Planning policy | The Guardian](#)

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[Greens urge government to act on fuel poverty crisis today](#)



2 December 2022

Green Party spokespeople have brought together a cross-government set of demands to ease the growing burden of fuel poverty and tackle the climate crisis.

To mark Fuel Poverty Awareness day today and Fuel Poverty Action day tomorrow, Green Party spokespeople have written to key Ministers to tell them that only joined-up government action can deliver the measures needed.

On housing, spokesperson Ellie Chowns called for a fully-funded, nationwide, long-term retrofit programme to insulate all housing to the maximum possible level, an immediate end to the building of hard-to-heat homes, higher building standards, and a winter ban on no-fault evictions.

For people with disabilities, spokesperson Mags Lewis called for targeted fuel subsidies for those whose home energy use is higher than average as a result of their disability, guaranteed support in the event of blackouts for disabled people reliant on equipment like ventilators, and a priority home insulation programme to bring down bills.

On health, spokesperson and GP Dr Pallavi Devulapalli called for increased subsidies targeted at those made most vulnerable by cold homes with poor ventilation, recognition of the mental and physical toll of poorly insulated, cold homes, and free hot school dinners for all children to ensure none go hungry this winter.

Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay said:

“The work of our spokespeople shows clearly how the impact of fuel poverty is felt across the population and why it requires political leadership and joined-up action to deliver the policies to combat it.

“New figures produced today by the National Energy Action for Fuel Poverty Awareness Day [1] show the growing scale of the problem, which is destined to worsen through the winter without concerted government action.

“We believe that a national home insulation programme will deliver warm, affordable and healthy homes for people while reducing energy use and helping to tackle the climate crisis.”

NOTES:

[1]

<https://www.nea.org.uk/news/8-4-million-uk-households-will-be-in-fuel-poverty-from-april-says-national-energy-action/>

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[Green Party calls for insulation grants to help small businesses](#)

survive cost of living crisis



2 December 2022

The Green Party of England and Wales is calling on government to offer a Small Business Saturday reprieve to firms facing soaring costs through insulation grants and a package of support measures.

Co-leader Adrian Ramsay said:

“We know from visiting independent businesses and social enterprises up and down the country that they want to green their operations, improve employee welfare and make it easier for people to shop locally.

“But they need government to get behind them and offer the right package of incentives.

“Businesses tell our councillors that they want government insulation grants, reform of business rates to incentivise greener business practices, differential VAT rates to favour small businesses, and an immediate suspension of Covid-loan repayments.

“Small and independent businesses and enterprises are the lifeblood of local communities. Small businesses can help revitalise our high streets.

“Yet, many are struggling with the cost of living and high energy bills. Running costs are set to increase again in March when the government’s short-term support will end.

“The Green Party has long been the party of small business. We want to see them thrive.”

This Small Business Saturday the Green Party are calling for:

1. Grants to insulate small businesses to cut energy bills and emissions. Government should provide businesses with grants to insulate their premises to reduce their running costs, energy use, and emissions for good.
2. Higher business rate exemption for small businesses that green their operations. Businesses should be incentivised to green their operations by not having to pay higher business rates as a result of taking sustainable measures such as installing solar panels.
3. Support for small businesses to improve employee wellbeing. Government must support businesses to improve the wellbeing of their employees. Measures should include exempting all childcare providers in England from business rates.

4. Reform of VAT to support small businesses and suspension of Covid repayments. The government must reform our VAT system so that it differentially supports smaller shops and businesses compared to larger and online businesses. Likewise, there should be an immediate suspension of Covid loan repayments to provide much needed relief for businesses.
5. Creation of Virtual High Streets. Councils should work with small and independent businesses so residents can use an online portal to buy from participating local shops and have items delivered on the same or next day.

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[Green councillors call on Michael Gove to properly fund local services](#)



2 December 2022

Green councillors in ruling administrations in England and Wales have written to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, calling on him “to ensure proper funding of local services and... sound policy that works for people, not profit.”

The Green cabinet members and committee chairs who have signed the letter have called for a three-year funding settlement, an increase in all council budgets in line with inflation, an increase in investment for retrofitting homes and in services for the most vulnerable, particularly adult and child social care.

In the letter, the councillors say: “It makes no financial sense to cut local government funding to the point where they can no longer deliver even basic services.”

They urge Mr Gove to “join local government in working to protect the most vulnerable and build resilient, joyful communities, so we can serve our communities in the way they deserve and give them hope for the future.”

Co-leader of the Green Party, Carla Denyer, who is a councillor in Bristol, said:

“Councils are at breaking point. Several, including Tory controlled Councils, are on the verge of bankruptcy. Michael Gove must listen, not just to the

strong chorus from Councils run by opposition parties, but also to Tory councillors.

“The Conservative head of the Local Government Association has said: ‘the numbers just do not add up,’ and added: ‘We desperately need to protect budgets and services from the impact of inflation, without which there will be real service cuts to some of the most vulnerable in our communities.’ [1].

“As councillors, we work hard to build communities that are fairer, greener and healthier. We work to support local businesses, deliver vital services and protect and improve local environments.

“In order to do so effectively, councils need a guarantee from Michael Gove that we will receive an increase in all council budgets in line with inflation and a three-year funding settlement.

“We need that funding certainty so we can increase investment in adult and child social care. We need it to fund the insulation of our homes to make them warmer and cheaper for residents to run.

“If Michael Gove is really committed to levelling up, to decent housing and building strong communities, he must listen to councils and act.”

NOTES:

[1]

<https://www.local.gov.uk/events/past-event-presentations/lga-annual-conference-2022/lga-chairman-cllr-james-jamieson-welc>

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