

# The Conservatives are failing to protect nature

**The Conservatives' Environment Bill will fail to protect British nature and our beautiful landscapes.**

We are already living in **one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world**. Our waterways are in a poor condition with just 14% in good condition. More than 40% of native species are in decline.

This is an embarrassment – as the Government claims to be increasing ambition and pushing for nature-based solutions in the run-up to both COP26 and the Convention on Biological Diversity, **we're failing to get our own house in order**.

More than 40% of native species are in decline.”

We must significantly **increase** our protections for nature and biodiversity in this country, including our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We need a strong independent body with the powers and resources to **hold the Government to account**.

Alongside the Environment Bill being debated today, the Government have proposed a mass **change to planning law**. The Bill would **deny** Councils the ability to block new developments for environmental reasons. The Conservatives' plans would **rip power away from communities** and silence local environmental groups to allow developers to build as they please.

The Conservatives' plans would **rip power away from communities**”

We should have expected nothing less from a party which has taken over £11 million in donations from developers.

That's why I tabled an amendment to stop reckless developments harming nature and reducing biodiversity.

My amendment would give **real teeth to the currently toothless Environment Bill** and arm Councils with the power to protect wildlife and green spaces. The Conservatives voted against giving communities extra power to protect nature and improve biodiversity.

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## Looking back at Spring Conference

Federal Conference Committee met on 25th May 2021 to consider the feedback from Spring Conference. It was an overflow meeting to deal with the business that could not be considered at the last meeting, which was constricted to facilitate campaigning for the Local Elections.

We discussed the feedback that we received from **Spring Conference**. We were very happy with it overall. We had **attendees from 26 countries**. **The average person spent 15 hours at conference**. **In total, there were over 13,000 votes cast and over 17,500 chat messages**. **We came within 3% of our record attendance for a Spring Conference**.

When asked whether they had had a good time, expressed as a mark out of five, over 88% marked conference as 3 or above, 66.5% as 4 or 5. 72% rated Hopin as good or very good and 92% of people had no major technical issues. **92% liked the balance of debates and speeches and 84% thought the auditorium experience was good or very good**. 71% thought the fringe sessions were good or very good. 82% thought the registration price was about right and 95% were more proud or had the same feelings of pride about the party after conference as before. **We were grateful to all of those who took the time and trouble to let us know their views**. We have taken them on board.

The experiences of the exhibition were a lot more mixed. We recognise that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to recreate the experience of a physical exhibition online. **We talked about ways to improve the exhibition experience**. We talked about playing more exhibitor videos in the auditorium (and we are making those free for Autumn Conference), extending the sessions for the exhibition so that some overlap with the auditorium as at a physical conference, and encouraging exhibitors to use the chat feature to make their stalls more dynamic.

Turning to motions, it was proposed that we discontinue the practice of name blind selections. It was suggested that knowing from where prospective motions derived would allow the committee to take positive steps to select an agenda from more diverse sources, allowing us to counter the inbuilt bias towards motions written by those more familiar with the process, such as parliamentarians or FPC members. For example, a motion from a Local Party or an SAO could be preferred to one from a spokesperson on the same subject (given that many motions are regularly submitted from the Parliamentary Party). It was also observed that many people place their motions in the public domain anyway, which can defeat the object. On the other hand, name blind submissions can counter unconscious bias. The committee had a full discussion and there were many contributions. The vote was very tight. **Overall, the majority was persuaded that ending name blind submissions would make for an agenda more likely to represent a wider range of more diverse sources of ideas in the party, and that was something that the committee**

wanted to encourage.

We decided that we would reserve speaking slots for **guest speakers from the European Union and/or other European nations**. We considered a number of really good suggestions from the International Office. Watch this space for further details.

Planning for Autumn Conference 2021 will now get underway in earnest. The **deadline for drafting advice is 16th June and for motions, 30th June; both at 1pm**. FCC will meet in July to select the agenda.

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## Local lockdowns by stealth are completely irresponsible

Changing policy by stealth is **completely irresponsible**.

Changing policy by stealth is completely irresponsible.

Matt Hancock should have made clear the changes he was making to guidance in **advance** and **communicated it to the public and local officials**.

He needs to **make clear the situation immediately** to Parliament.

Clarification on the new rules in these areas is now needed, not only for residents but for those that would normally travel to the affected areas.

People cross these invisible boundaries every day for medical appointments or to go shopping.

Clarification on the new rules in these areas is now needed.

The Government **urgently** need to make it clear whether they should avoid travelling to or through these areas and under what circumstances this is now permitted.

It is now **critical** that the thousands of **key workers** that travel to these areas everyday, but live elsewhere, **should be made eligible for vaccination**.

Surge vaccination in these areas for residents is key to slowing the spread of the virus but to slow it further **it must be extended to anyone who works**

there too.

The Govt changing policy by stealth in Hounslow following rise in Indian variant is irresponsible. My constituents work, shop & go to school there. They need clear guidance on what they can & cannot do. [@nadhimzahawi](#)'s answer was vague & I'll be pressing for more clarity [pic.twitter.com/afJcLcCmkQ](https://pic.twitter.com/afJcLcCmkQ)

– Munira Wilson MP (@munirawilson) [May 25, 2021](#)

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## [One year on from George Floyd's murder](#)

Today marks one year since George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, was brutally murdered by a police officer on the streets of Minneapolis.

George's murder – and the wave of protests it sparked – forced us all to confront the racial injustice that Black people face every day.

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The past twelve months have brought watershed moments.

The Black Lives Matter movement rose to prominence around the world.

It inspired many of us to have difficult but important conversations about race – **myself included**.

And in April, Derek Chauvin was found guilty of George's murder.

Although Chauvin's guilty verdict is a step in the right direction, **we are still a long way from achieving racial justice**.

As Minnesota's Attorney General Keith Ellison said, we should not call this *"verdict justice... because justice implies true restoration. But it is accountability, which is the first step towards justice."*

It's clear **there is still so much to do** – and that this is not a uniquely American problem.

We will keep working to combat racism – whether conscious or unconscious, individual or institutional – wherever we find it.

Here in the UK, **far too many people's lives are blighted by discrimination, inequality and injustice.**

From the appalling Windrush Scandal and the disproportionate impact of the Covid pandemic to the over-representation of Black and mixed-race people in prison, there is still so much more we all must do to address institutional racism.

I'm proud that **Liberal Democrats exist to fight for justice, liberty and equality.**

And at our Autumn Conference last September, we passed a motion entitled 'Racial Justice Cannot Wait' that affirmed that Black Lives Matter and our commitment to achieving racial justice.

We are continuing our campaign to abolish the Conservatives' cruel and discriminatory Hostile Environment, end the disproportionate use of Stop and Search, and establish a comprehensive Covid-19 Race Equality Strategy.

And we will keep working to combat racism – whether conscious or unconscious, individual or institutional – **wherever we find it.**

We mustn't let George Floyd's memory fade.

**We must hold onto the outrage we felt at his murder, and continue to channel it into action for positive change.**

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## **Priti Patel has failed to get a grip on the UK's broken immigration system**

No amount of tough talk and bluster from the Home Secretary can hide the fact that she has **utterly failed** to get a grip on the UK's broken immigration system.

Priti Patel has been talking tough about immigration for ages, while failing miserably to make the system fairer or more

effective.

Years of Home Office failure, coupled with hostile policies and rhetoric from successive Conservative Home Secretaries, have **shattered public confidence**.

Instead of fixing the broken system, Priti Patel is pressing ahead with **damaging plans** that will create more chaos and make it harder for British employers to recruit the workers they need.

She talks about a new 'digital border', but apparently forgot to mention that the existing project is years behind schedule and more than £170 million over budget.

And she is **refusing** to provide safe and legal routes for vulnerable refugees to come to the UK, even as she invokes our proud tradition of offering sanctuary to those in need.

Priti Patel has been talking tough about immigration for ages, while **failing miserably** to make the system fairer or more effective.

As she said today: **enough is enough**.

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