

“green alliance...”

issue **1**  
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COMMITTS TO REPORTING

# GREENING THE TREASURY

Paul Boateng MP

Matthew Taylor MP

Patrick Begg



Inside Track is the quarterly magazine of Green Alliance.

Edited and designed by Sarah Flood.

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are you doing **your bit?**

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The views of contributors are not necessarily those of Green Alliance.

# comment



## Greening the Treasury

Though it is never far from the centre of power, the influence of the Treasury will be felt more strongly than ever this year. In July, the results of the 2002 spending round will be announced, establishing the Government's spending priorities for three years from 2003. Between now and then, each Secretary of State will negotiate with Treasury ministers to preserve – and, with luck, perhaps even expand – their precious funds.

It's not just money they're bargaining over. Through Public Service Agreements (PSAs), the Treasury agrees a set of targets with each department, that the spending will be used to achieve. Lack of success in meeting targets translates directly into less money to spend. So the Treasury has considerable influence over the priorities of each department. It's a good means of ensuring delivery – but extends Treasury influence into every nook and cranny of government policy.

It is not surprising that interest groups from all sectors are queuing up have their say. Environmentalists are no exception. Green Alliance has been working with Treasury officials since last summer, to discuss the measures we would like to see put in place to make this the greenest spending round yet. Together with other NGOs including Greenpeace, WWF-UK and RSPB, we have met ministers and advisers, suggested ways of appraising spending for its environmental impact, and presented the Treasury with our own green shopping lists, showing how we think the money should be spent.

At the last spending round, in 2000, scant attention was paid to sustainable development objectives. We are seeing some improvements this time round. The Treasury is now asking departments to assess the impact of their spending bids on sustainable development, in the form of a report to accompany bids. This is a long-standing recommendation by NGOs including Green Alliance, and a welcome step forward – as long as the Treasury uses these reports to hold ministers to account.

In this edition of *Inside Track*, Paul Boateng, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, argues that the Treasury is doing more than ever to promote sustainable development. But Matthew Taylor MP, the Liberal Democrat shadow chancellor, and Patrick Begg from the National Trust, point out that there's plenty more to do before the Treasury can rest on its green laurels. We'll know for sure when the results are announced in July. In the meantime, if you have views on how the government should be spending - or not spending - its money, I am sure that the Treasury will be only too pleased to hear.

*Rebecca Willis, director, Green Alliance*

# A new look for *Inside Track*

This is the first edition of our new-look *Inside Track*. Following consultation with readers, and with the kind help of Mark Smith and Mark Griffiths at Interbrand, we have aimed to devise a more readable and interesting layout allowing a wider range of news and comment on environmental policy and politics. It will continue to be issued quarterly. The changes are not intended to be just cosmetic, the new *Inside Track* will be a two-way communication and provide a forum for members to debate issues and inform us about their work.

It is part of our ongoing programme to improve communication with members, subscribers and supporters, and we are very grateful to Thames Water for their support of this work. We will also be developing our website, to bring you better access to publications, and more news from Green Alliance. New developments will be featured in future issues of *Inside Track*.

We hope you like the new look *Inside Track* and welcome your comments and suggestions for ways in which you think it could be altered or improved. Please send your thoughts or ideas for articles to *Inside Track's* editor, Sarah Flood, at Green Alliance's address or via email to [sflood@green-alliance.org.uk](mailto:sflood@green-alliance.org.uk)

“ Thames Water is delighted to support Green Alliance's 2002 communications programme.

Our reasons for doing so are two-fold. First, 'think tanks' – of which Green Alliance is a leader in the environmental arena – play a pivotal role in UK policy-making and provide a valuable forum for diverse interests such as business, NGOs, government and individuals to articulate their views and help shape the direction of policy now and in the future. As the UK's leading water services company and the third largest in the world, Thames Water believes that we can make a significant contribution to the environmental debate. By sponsoring this programme, we can help engage a wide variety of opinion formers in the public policy process.

Our second reason is more ambitious: sustainability, a key global public policy issue. Last year, in his speech on sustainable development, the Prime Minister expressed his desire to bring business and NGOs together to develop innovative strategies to promote sustainable development globally, nationally and locally. Organisations such as Green Alliance can act as brokers in this process, setting agendas, initiating discussions and developing solutions. Sustainability is at the heart of our business and we believe our expertise and experience can add real value to the debate. I look forward to making a significant contribution at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg later this year.

Thames Water is a global business, operating in 44 countries and providing 43 million customers with life enhancing services. Whilst we are proud of our achievements – including the revitalisation of the River Thames – we are aware of the need to continue to build on this success. We recognise that we have a broader responsibility to the communities we serve, to be more than just a water provider. That is why our work with organisations such as the Green Alliance is of vital importance to help inform our business priorities.

We look forward to working with Green Alliance during 2002. If you require information about Thames Water's operations or activities please visit our website at [www.thames-water.com](http://www.thames-water.com) or contact Kathryn Oakley, Head of Political Affairs, at [kathryn.oakley@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:kathryn.oakley@thameswater.co.uk)

Bill Alexander, Chief Executive Thames Water

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# Would the Lib Dems spend green?

As part of Green Alliance's initiative to turn this year's Treasury spending round into an opportunity for the environment, we held a seminar in January for Liberal Democrat MPs and advisers on *Environmental approaches to the forthcoming spending round*.

Attended by Liberal Democrat MPs - both environment and Treasury spokespeople - and specialists from the environmental movement, the seminar worked to identify areas of mutual interest between Liberal Democrats and green groups. There was agreement on the need to shift spending priorities in several areas – including public transport, waste, energy, farming and international development – as well as a spirited debate about how the revenue could be raised to do this. There was also a discussion on the need to highlight the role of Public Service Agreements (PSAs), and to make greater use of joint PSA targets to encourage joint action between departments.

Following through on ideas from the seminar, Green Alliance and the other NGOs involved will be working with the Liberal Democrats to encourage them to highlight these issues in parliament and the media.

*For further information about this project please contact Rachel Butterworth at Green Alliance's office. This project is part of Green Alliance's politics programme. Also see page 8 where Matthew Taylor sets out his blueprint for a greener treasury.*

## UK waste industry commits to reporting

Over half the UK's waste sector has committed to reporting on its environmental performance, using a set of environmental performance indicators, developed by Green Alliance. Eleven companies have signed up: Biffa, Cleanway, Cory Environmental, Durham County Waste Management, Greater Manchester Waste, Grundon, Viridor, Shanks, SITA, Waste Recycling Group and Waste Tyre Solutions/Automotive Waste Solutions.

The launch of the indicators in November marks the conclusion of Green Alliance's *Indicating Right* project, funded by landfill tax credits from Biffaward, Shanks First and Viridor Waste Management. Michael Meacher, Minister for the Environment and Barbara Young, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency both welcomed the indicators at the launch. Friends of the Earth, Waste Watch, the Environmental Services Association and the Institute of Wastes Management have also given their backing.

The indicators cover all the major environmental impacts of waste management, including measures of methane and other climate change emissions, transport, waste minimisation and neighbourliness. They have been developed by Green Alliance over the past three years, in consultation with waste management companies and other stakeholders.

The commitments made by the 11 companies signed up to the indicators represent a big step forward in improving the waste sector's environmental performance, as well as its transparency. We are hoping that the remaining companies in the sector will now commit to the indicators. Several have shown interest.

Environmental performance indicators are vital to understand the performance of any sector, but the framework of policies that companies operate in is equally important. Green Alliance's waste work will now be looking at the policies that not only reduce the impact of waste management but also allow business and waste management companies to contribute to improving the UK's resource productivity.

*Copies of the project's final report Indicating Right are available from Green Alliance priced £5 or are free to download from Green Alliance's website. For more information please contact Ben Shaw.*

# Rethinking MAFF

## Green Alliance has been helping DEFRA create a sustainable development strategy

Since its creation last June, DEFRA has been watched closely by environmentalists. Will the integration of environment with rural affairs result in the much-needed transition to sustainable agriculture? Will DEFRA have the clout to win out in departmental fights over energy or waste – and to win money in this year’s spending round? And, importantly, will DEFRA manage to shake off its predecessor department’s reputation for secrecy and lack of accessibility to stakeholders?

Green Alliance has been working with DEFRA’s sustainable development unit to help make sure that the department’s name is not the only thing that changes. In spring 2002, the new department will be producing its sustainable development strategy, setting out the contribution that DEFRA policies can make to the achievement of an improved quality of life. We have been working with DEFRA to offer them some challenging perspectives from stakeholders in business, government and the NGO sector.

To stimulate discussion, Green Alliance asked seven commentators, including Michael Jacobs, Maria Adebawale and Andrew Clark, for their personal views of the priorities, opportunities and pitfalls for the strategy. This was followed by a seminar with representatives from NGOs, business and other interests, designed to brainstorm possible themes for the strategy. Three cross-cutting themes or priorities emerged – innovation; social inclusion and environmental justice; and localism.

The idea of enabling innovation, both in terms of process and actual policy, inspired many of the participants to the seminar. The concept could apply to the department internally, to create internal conditions that encourage innovation. There is also an external focus – on policies designed to enable environmental and social innovation. Environmental and social justice were also seen as important in delivering DEFRA’s aim of improving quality of life. Within this broad theme, focus could be given to how to ensure access to amenities, health, and a clean environment. Lastly, the theme of localism would encourage DEFRA to look at the interface between policies and services at a local, regional and national level, with a focus on improving the links. Green Alliance held further seminars on each of these themes.

Our work ran alongside two other consultation processes – a public consultation, run by IPPR, and an invitation to all DEFRA’s stakeholders to contribute written submissions directly. DEFRA are now drafting the strategy, to be published in the spring. It remains to be seen whether the strategy will have influence across the department, to catalyse a much-needed rethink on these issues. But the very process of drawing it up has been an impressive exercise in stakeholder involvement, which we very much hope will become the norm for DEFRA, to make a refreshing change from its predecessor.

“Will DEFRA have the clout to win out in departmental fights over energy or waste – and to win money in this year’s spending round? And, importantly, will DEFRA manage to shake off its predecessor department’s reputation for secrecy and lack of accessibility to stakeholders?”

*For further details on Green Alliance’s work on the strategy, please contact Charlotte Marples [cmarples@green-alliance.org.uk](mailto:cmarples@green-alliance.org.uk). Within DEFRA, the Sustainable Development Unit are leading on this work, contact [jenny.mainland@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.mainland@defra.gsi.gov.uk) or go to [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk).*

# The power of the

## Paul Boateng MP sets out how the government will promote sustainable development through the forthcoming spending round



The environmental challenge, and the goal of sustainable development, has a central position in the agenda of this government. The world around us is altered: climate change, depleted natural resources, and decreasing biodiversity present us with new problems and new possibilities. Our attitude must also change. Our relationship with the natural world should be characterised by enlightened self-interest and the pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes. Where we employ resources we should aim to enhance them, where we deplete them they should be replenished, and strategies for sustainable development should run through everything we do.

In the past short-sighted governments, businesses, and consumers placed too low a price on the environment. The economy was allowed to grow at the expense of the ecosystem. The demands of today's families were met and the rights of tomorrow's children were often ignored.

The role of government has always been to balance competing claims

on the national resources. In the past this has meant balancing the interests of the unions against the those of business, or the interests of the energy industry against the those defended by the environmental lobby. The challenge for the future is to reconcile those interests and find a way forward that is good for the environment, good for the economy, and good for society as a whole.

This means drawing a line under the divisive 'them and us' mentality that has characterised British politics for too long. The role of government has always been to balance competing interests, but as those interests converge around the need for environmental improvement, our role changes. There is an emerging consensus on the need for protection of scarce environmental and social resources. The challenge for the future is to design and implement the policies to achieve these objectives.

The way that government organises itself internally in designing and implementing sustainable development policies is of crucial importance. The Treasury – at the heart of government economic and fiscal policy – has an important role to play. We are in a position to ensure that green principles permeate the spending plans of each and every department. I met recently with representatives of WWF and I was struck by the contribution of its Chief Executive, Robert Napier, to Green Alliance's open letter to the Prime Minister. He said 'joined-up policy-making is

every environmentalist's dream', and joined up policy-making is what we are determined to deliver. This is a challenge and requires a new approach to the business of government.

Control over tax and spending priorities however gives us a powerful tool for joining up policies across government. By building environmental, social and economic considerations into the ways we raise revenue we can ensure that the burden of taxation is shifted towards environmental 'bads' like pollution and away from environmental or social 'goods' like the development of green technology or the creation of sustainable employment opportunities.

Building these same principles into the way we distribute funds we can ensure that all government spending supports the principle of green government. That is why I have announced our commitment to sustainable development and, over the coming weeks and months, will be working in the Green Minister's Committee and with colleagues across government to help them to plant the seeds of sustainability into their spending proposals.

Spending Review 2002 will be an opportunity to integrate sustainability into our assessment of every department's spending priorities. As the Treasury's Green Minister I am in the lead on this process. Work has already begun. For the first time guidance on sustainable development has been published and issued to all

# e public purse ...

government departments. They will draw on this guidance to produce sustainable development reports, forming an integral part of the Spending Review.

Control over the public purse is a powerful lever. The way we raise money is an equally powerful tool. The Treasury has control of the government's fiscal policy and, working with other government departments, green NGOs, and the business community, we have designed a range of taxes intended to promote the protection of scarce natural resources.

In April of last year we introduced a Climate Change Levy that will, it is estimated, save emissions of five million tonnes of carbon a year. This is not an extra burden on industry or a barrier to economic growth, the changes are revenue neutral and the £1 billion we expect to raise in the first year will be recycled to business, partly through extra support for energy efficiency and partly through cuts to employers' National Insurance Contributions.

Revenue from the Climate Change Levy will help finance the new £50 million carbon trust: providing energy efficiency advice and audits to business; and supporting the development of new low carbon technologies. This is sound business sense and sound environmental sense, part of a coherent strategy to ensure that the achievement of environmental, economic and social goals are mutually reinforcing.

We are establishing the world's first economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions trading scheme. The scheme will begin in April of this year, creating strong incentives for

participants to reduce their output of carbon dioxide and ensuring that the true cost of emissions is reflected in the price that companies pay. The efficiency of the market will be turned towards the public good and the development of the economy will be married to the sustainability of the environment.

The Climate Change Levy demonstrates that the tax system can be used effectively to protect

**“Government has a role as a facilitator, turning the chorus of voices from the environmental lobby, the business community, and the ecologists into a coherent set of deliverable policies.”**

the environment, without placing additional burdens on the business sector. The Aggregates Levy will operate on the same principle. Extensive research has shown that aggregates extraction has environmental costs and the tax will ensure that the polluter pays for them. The levy will be introduced in April 2002 and, like the Climate Change Levy, it will be revenue neutral.

Fiscal incentives are also playing a part in our efforts to encourage cleaner vehicles and fuels, rewarding less pollution with lower tax rates. The Treasury is fully

involved in the advancement of government strategy for encouraging the early development and take-up of the next generation of low carbon vehicles and fuels. We are committed to the introduction of this new technology and we will introduce further tax reforms to support it. The tax system can be a powerful lever for influencing the choice made by producers and consumers, creating the incentives necessary for the development of a greener transport system.

We have achieved a lot. We have arrived at a new understanding of our relationship with the natural world. Our sustainable development strategy is founded on the desire for 'a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.' We have all come to recognise that the interests of today's families and tomorrow's children can be reconciled. There is an emerging consensus around the idea of sustainable development. The challenge now is to turn that idea into the reality of government policy.

Government has a role as a facilitator, turning the chorus of voices from the environmental lobby, the business community, and the ecologists into a coherent set of deliverable policies. The Treasury has an important part to play: co-ordinating government policy; ensuring that the spending priorities across different departments, and the tax measures we use to raise money for the public purse, support our overarching strategy for sustainable development.



# Blueprint for a greener Treasury...

Matthew Taylor MP outlines what the Liberal Democrats would do to ensure that government tax and spending works to protect the environment

The Treasury is of course only one government department amongst many. Yet by setting the economic incentives it can in many ways be the most subtly powerful arm of government in achieving environmental objectives. The power of the Treasury will therefore be crucial to tackling environmental issues like climate change, persistent and cumulative organic pollutants, local air pollution, and congestion

All of these are potentially amenable to solutions which need a greener Treasury to play a far more robust role in environmental policy. In each case the aim is to use the incentive people have to reduce the amount of tax they pay, to reduce the damage peoples' actions cause to society. Taxes may not eliminate pollution, but they can influence people and businesses to reduce it to levels the world can bear.

To design green taxes we first need to understand both the damage done and the best, practical way of reducing it. Yet in too many cases the government does not collect information on the consequences of environmental damage, or even the amount of that damage. The Treasury collects a lot of statistics, but a greener Treasury would insist on a much clearer environmental audit of the state of Britain.

Even when the cost of environmental damage is known, Britain's over-centralised government means that there is very little experience of different ways of dealing with it. Contrast this with the US, or many European countries, which have a federal system which encourages experimentation. If you are a policy-maker in Idaho you have 49 other states to examine to consider which has the most appropriate system for

dealing with, for instance, pollution by organic compounds. A greener Treasury would be more willing to let devolved administrations make their own decisions, to encourage the innovation that will deliver better solutions. Yet as the Treasury publishes target after target, what little decentralised decision taking we have is being squeezed out of the system. It is not just an environmental issue of course – but environmental issues require innovation, so a Greener Treasury would be far less centralised.

Another way in which Britain lags behind many other countries is our unwillingness to undertake pilot projects. This means that British governments tend to rush in with a big policy change, which is defended politically until it is abandoned, when it is superseded with a new big policy. Inevitably this means that the practical issues that need to be ironed out are rarely resolved before policies are implemented, and the teething problems then mean good policies are often dropped. Other options are of course never even tried because there have never been any pilot schemes that

show that they might work. Instead of trying to nail down every area of government to centralised control, a greener Treasury would insist that best practice and best value is built on solid research, innovative pilots and proper monitoring of outcomes.

Liberal Democrats know that often the most effective way of aligning the costs faced by individuals with the cost to society of environmentally-damaging

activities is to use accurately targeted environmental taxation or charges. Hence our support for a carbon tax, which efficiently means that people pay the cost that their emissions of carbon cause society. The Government's decision to opt instead for the Climate

**“Taxes may not eliminate pollution, but they can influence people and business to reduce it to levels the world can bear”**

Change Levy meant that it could never as accurately reflect the level of pollution from each energy option, which often means it leads to perverse incentives to pollute more, not less.

However, whilst environmental taxation is a good idea in theory, it may not always be workable in practice. For instance, fuel duty is well targeted at carbon emissions, but does not take into account local air pollution and congestion, and can place an unfair burden on rural travellers who have no practical alternatives to the car. Congestion charges in towns and cities (especially if reinvested in improved public transport) can be a far more precisely targeted ‘tax’ on the worst congestion and pollution, while allowing investment in a reliable, fast and clean public transport alternative. So a greener Treasury must be one that takes more account of the whole picture to find the right solution, not always the first that comes to hand, or the simplest to implement.

Nor are taxes always the best option. In some circumstances issuing of tradeable licenses to industry or individuals might be a more effective way of limiting environmental impact to an acceptable level. One obvious example is the potential use of abstraction licenses for water from rivers. All major users could be issued with a license for taking no more than is sustainable out of each river. These users could then be allowed to trade their licenses, so that the water we can sustainably abstract is used in the most efficient way. Similarly, a certain percentage of renewable energy can be a requirement on energy suppliers, with this requirement tradeable between them, to ensure we increase renewables to the level needed and this is done through the markets to deliver best value and innovation.

Sadly, the Government’s approach has had other major flaws that mean that key environmental measures taken by the Treasury have been badly targeted. To its credit the government has made the Climate Change Levy a tax change rather than a tax increase, unlike road fuel taxation (a subject I will return to), and it has also corrected some of the worst issues in its original proposals. Nevertheless, there remains a complete inconsistency of taxation of carbon by source. Road fuels are very heavily taxed, arguably too heavily in some circumstances, whilst aviation fuel is completely untaxed and the Climate Change Levy does not comprehensively fill the gaps. A simple carbon tax would tax all sources of energy by carbon

content, either when they enter the UK, or at the point of production in the UK. This would save businesses and Government millions of pounds a year in administration of the energy levy, and discriminate precisely against the level of carbon content, so encouraging less polluting fuels very accurately. For the most part, the Treasury has gone for systems that are simple for the Treasury, at the expense of environmental effectiveness and the administrative costs to everyone else. A greener Treasury would reverse these priorities, to the great benefit of us all.

Similarly, the Government seems to have no medium term strategy for our taxes. So, for example, nobody knows what the level of Climate Change Levy or fuel duty will be in five or ten years time. Most users of energy have a much higher ability to change their consumption in the long term than in the short term. In the short term a company can change the times of the day and year it uses electricity, but in the longer term it can invest in more energy efficient machinery and buildings. Once a company knows that it will face increasing charges in the medium term for using energy when it replaces equipment it will be able to take this into account by buying more

energy efficient equipment. So a greener Treasury would be one that sets out its thinking years ahead, not budget by budget (or spin by spin). Otherwise, the greatest potential benefits of environmental taxation (the effect on long term capital investment) are mostly thrown away, whilst businesses are hit by sudden tax rises and so are penalised for past investment decisions they can do little or nothing to correct.

Finally, let me return to what I believe is the most important issue of all. Government has successfully discredited environmental taxation as a form of changing taxes by using the main form, road fuel taxation, (and preciously VAT on fuel) to raise revenue rather than as a tax change. The simple pledge that environmental tax reform will be just that – a reform of the tax system, not a stealth tax increase – would go a long way to re-igniting the momentum behind using the tax system to save the planet that was brought to such a grinding halt twice before – once with Conservative VAT on fuel and the protests that followed, and then with the petrol price rises, which led to an inevitable government back-down in the face of fuel price protests. People want a greener Treasury, but they do not want to be cheated by tax rises dressed in green clothing. A greener Treasury has to be a more honest Treasury too, and everyone would, I think, welcome that!

“The Treasury has gone for systems that are simple for the Treasury, at the expense of environmental effectiveness. A greener Treasury would reverse these priorities.”

# Valuing our environment

## Patrick Begg, head of policy and planning at the National Trust, lays down some green spending challenges

Are the fiscal policies of the Government doing all they can for the environment? One might think so. In the face of immense industry opposition, for example, the Government has stuck to its guns on the Climate Change Levy. Despite some teething problems, the Landfill Tax is delivering significant revenue for local environmental action. The incentives to fill your vehicle with less polluting fuel remain in place, and our urban areas and old churches are being turned around by changes to VAT and stamp duty.

The reality though is much more complex. In 2002 the opportunities for the green movement to make real progress in shaping fiscal policy are as keen as they have ever been. The focus now is shifting from tax to spend. The 'polluter pays' victories embodied in fiscal measures such as the Landfill Tax and Climate Change Levy have been significant. But the game plan now is more sophisticated in the effects it seeks to achieve. Yes, taxation measures which provide strong disincentives to damage the environment are welcome and indeed necessary. But increasingly it is clear that the fundamental shifts we are aiming for also need Government to be greener at its roots.

This year's Spending Review will set budgets and targets for all government departments to the year 2006. Critically it will also through Public Service Agreements - define what departments will do and what they will **not** do in

spending £400 billion a year. It is also the primary arena for government to assess and resolve joint departmental action on the biggest priorities. This year one of the overarching priorities is 'improving the quality of life in both rural and urban areas', which provides unparalleled opportunities to press the sustainability agenda. More than that, the terms of reference seek specific action from departments in analysing what positive action for quality of life can be made through a cross-cutting review.

So, the focus has rightly been on the tools government could and should use to square sustainability objectives and indicators, as defined in *A Better*

*Quality of Life*, against departmental spending bids. We now want to mainstream green spending and the front rank battle is being fought over process.

We need to press for leadership, transparency, accountability and expertise in departments' consideration of the quality of life agenda. Progress is already in hand. Under pressure from the green NGOs, the Treasury has published simple guidance on how departments should consider sustainable development in drawing up a bid. This may not seem much, but it provides a comprehensive yardstick by which departments are expected to operate. The next step, of course, is to bring accountability to bear on the results of the guidance, and for this to be made publicly available. We need to press hard for assessments to be made and then published for all

final decisions from Spending Review bids through to draft Public Service Agreements.

How will we know if we are winning the war and not just the battles? Some eye-catching departmental examples ought to signal success. Already in DTLR, for example, we can be satisfied that the recent £1.5 billion settlement on Local Transport Plan spending shifts investment away from new roads. But what of future transport spending? In DEFRA, the level of modulation to be settled in the wake of the many Government-instigated inquiries into farming represents another litmus test.

While in the department for culture, media and sport the recent statement on heritage policy, broadly welcomed by the sector as a starting point, needs to be backed by firm action on measures to encourage investment in sustaining the existing building blocks of our historic environment.

The true sign of success will lie elsewhere, in particular if we see a visible greening of the spending commitments of those departments out of the environmental spotlight. Whatever the outcome, be sure to make some time in July to study the Spending Review, the best measure yet of judging how green is our government.

**“We need to press hard for assessments to be made and then published for all final decisions, from Spending Review bids through to draft Public Service Agreements.”**

# No time like the future: A debate about environmental possibilities



Photograph by Malcolm Crowthers

Sarah Montague, MT Rainey and Robin Murray

What could the environment look like in 2020? What visions do we have for the future - and how might we get there? This was the theme of the debate at Green Alliance's annual meeting in November, chaired by Sarah Montague of Radio Four's Today Programme.

We asked four leading commentators, from very different backgrounds, to present their vision for the environment - and to tell us how it might happen. This is what they said.

## **MT Rainey: The future is now**

"The idea of the future is now culturally obsolete. We need to create an alternative idea, a mandate for now. As long as we continue to paint the consequences of our actions into some future, imagined landscape, the longer we suggest that action is merely altruistic and optional, rather than selfish and imperative. My scenario for 2020 is one in which we have succeeded in communicating the idea that the future is now. We must give people a mandate to live to the power of now, and not to the lazy lure of the future."

MT Rainey is co-chief executive at Rainey Kelly Campbell Roalfe Y&R

## **Jayne Forbes: Challenging globalisation**

"Ultimately, what is necessary to achieve a fairer global system is the re-orientation of the end goals of aid and trade rules so they contribute to the rebuilding of more sustainable national and regional economies in developing countries"

Jayne Forbes is the Green Party spokesperson on globalisation



Photograph by Malcolm Crowthers

Jayne Forbes

## **Robin Murray: Global knowledge, local production**

"Green is really part of the new wave. Green complexity is about rechristening commodities as service delivery platforms, and focusing on the social character of production: the connection of consumption and production. We need small firms, but large systems, Local production, with global knowledge. This is green complexity and it is out-competing the mass producers. By 2020, I would hope that instead of the three watchwords of the present - large, quick and heavy - we are small, slow and light."

Robin Murray is a Demos Associate

## **Michael Jacobs: Innovation, Innovation, Innovation**

"If we knew the answer to what the world should be like in 2020, we would really be in trouble. We need fundamental change in many of the ways we go about producing, consuming, travelling, living, and the ways we think about what those things are. We have to create a culture in which innovation is central - changing the way we do things, and changing the ways we get value out of life. A lot can change, and I think it's going to have to."

Michael Jacobs is General Secretary of the Fabian Society



Photograph by Malcolm Crowthers

Michael Jacobs

*A full transcript of this debate is available on our website [www.green-alliance.org.uk](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk)*

Green Alliance is an independent charity. Our mission is to promote sustainable development by ensuring that the environment is at the heart of decision-making.

We work with senior people in government, business and the environmental movement to encourage new ideas, dialogue and constructive solutions.

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# members' forum

As part of our annual meeting this year, we held our first ever members' forum, to give Green Alliance members the chance to feed in their thoughts about Green Alliance and to help shape its future direction.

Following a brief summary of our work over the past year, small discussion groups tackled four aspects of Green Alliance's work. Members were asked what topics Green Alliance should be addressing over the coming year; and how the organisation could develop over five years. They were also asked who Green Alliance should be working with, and why - and what they expected out of membership.



Photograph by Malcolm Crowthers

The responses made clear that members value Green Alliance's role in giving a political edge to environmentalism. Working across sectors - government, businesses, NGOs and academics - was also seen very positively. Members said that Green Alliance would benefit from an increased focus on business issues, and could experiment with new ways of engaging its supporters. All the ideas from the Forum have been fed into our planning - so watch this space!

Meanwhile, if you would like to offer your views on these subjects, or any others, then please contact our membership officer, Hilary Brennan, on [hbrennan@green-alliance.org.uk](mailto:hbrennan@green-alliance.org.uk)

## membership news

Green Alliance is pleased to welcome the following new individual members:

Paula Higgins  
Professor Nick Pidgeon  
Dr Bruce Tofield  
Richard Wilson  
Michael Pugh  
Joanna Collins  
Tristram Keech  
Nicholas Wilson  
Shaun Carr