

Briefing Queen's Speech 2022 Priorities for the environment



Background

The upcoming Queen's Speech comes at a time of extraordinary political instability in the UK and Europe. The UK is already beginning to experience the greatest fall in living standards in a generation, meanwhile armed conflict rages on in Ukraine. The cost of living crisis is being driven, in large part, by the significant increase in the wholesale price of gas and the knock on impact that is having on energy bills and food prices.

In this short briefing we set out the emerging priority areas for the environment. If you would like any further information on any of these issues, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Energy

The UK has announced that it aims to decarbonise its power sector by 2035, subject to security of supply. Similar developed economies, like the USA, Canada and Germany, have done the same. This push to rebuild power systems to allow economies to run on clean, green energy has become more important in the context of the gas price crisis. There have been rumours of a possible Energy Bill in the Queen's Speech that would cover a broad range of technical areas across the energy sector.

To ensure timely delivery of the 2035 decarbonisation target, and boost the UK's energy security, we believe an energy bill should:

- Introduce a legally binding target for power sector decarbonisation by 2035.
- Commit to a renewables-centred power sector, securing near term action, including reform of onshore wind planning restrictions, committing to a co-ordinated and integrated offshore transmission network, with targets of at least 50GW of offshore wind, around 35GW of onshore wind and 45GW of solar by 2030.
- Reform the capacity market so it increases the incentives within the system to purchase zero carbon flexible generation. The capacity market ensures security of electricity supply by providing a payment for reliable future sources of power generation. Reform will send important market signals for investment and innovation in new forms of zero carbon flexibility to balance a renewables-centred system.

This should be accompanied by a clean power plan, which should set out a roadmap for how the government will deliver a decarbonised power sector by 2035. In addition to expansion of renewable capacity and delivering the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements to ensure the provision of new forms of zero carbon power, announced

in the energy security strategy, should make clear how other policies supporting carbon capture and storage (CCS) and electricity storage will fit into the system's future needs.

Meanwhile, separate to legislation, boosting energy efficiency in UK homes and setting minimum efficiency standards in buildings can play an important role in reducing energy bills in the short term and futureproofing our building stock.

For more information on the current energy crisis, please see the following Green Alliance briefings: *How a decarbonised power system can boost UK energy security and save money*; *What does war in Ukraine mean for UK energy, and how can we reduce reliance on Russian oil and gas*; and *Protecting consumers from high energy bills*.

For more information about Green Alliance's work on energy, please contact:
Caterina Brandmayr, head of climate policy, cbrandmayr@green-alliance.org.uk

Transport

For the UK's highest emitting sector (32 per cent of UK carbon emissions), last year's transport decarbonisation plan was a great first step in aligning the transport system with net zero. A new Transport Bill would ensure decarbonisation is addressed through a series of measures which, together, offer significant emissions reductions across different transport modes.

This should include:

- A robust plan to expand public transport services – specifically buses and rail – across the UK, including rural areas which are not well served by public transport options. This is especially critical given recent announcements about local bus services being cut because of funding constraints and low passenger numbers due to the pandemic. The government should seek to engage the public through information and awareness campaigns that encourage people back onto public transport, particularly buses, which are a low cost travel option for many on low incomes. Expansion and improvement of public transport services is vital to encourage modal shift away from private cars and towards low carbon alternatives, and offers co-benefits, such as improved health, lower air pollution, lower congestion and better wellbeing. Electrification of the rail network should also be accelerated.
- Improvements to active travel infrastructure would help people to shift away from private cars towards walking and cycling. Cycling's popularity became evident during the pandemic, with levels up by 300 per cent, yet cycling infrastructure and storage spaces remain a barrier to more widespread adoption.
- The Welsh government recently imposed a moratorium on road building across the country as part of its plans to tackle climate change. This should be replicated across the rest of the UK, with a review of the £27.4 billion dedicated to the road network through the RIS2 programme. This funding should be reallocated to

expanding and improving public transport services, improving active travel infrastructure, and maintaining existing road infrastructure.

- The upcoming Jet Zero strategy will address aviation decarbonisation; however, it is critical that this strategy includes reference to the management of passenger numbers. The Department for Transport predicts almost unconstrained growth (74 per cent increase by 2050 on 2018 numbers) which is not in line with the government's net zero carbon by 2050 target. Alongside this, a ban on all airport expansion should be announced; the Climate Change Committee predicts a 25 per cent increase in passenger numbers by 2050, which can be met without the growth of existing UK airports.

For more information about Green Alliance's work on transport, please contact:
Helena Bennett, senior policy adviser, hbennett@green-alliance.org.uk

Private finance

This year, a major piece of primary legislation to embed the government's Future Regulatory Framework Review – the Future of Financial Services Bill – is expected. Separately, the government has committed to publish an update of the Green Finance Strategy, which sets out its approach to greening the financial system, before the end of 2022.

Given that green finance is the future of the UK's financial sector, as recognised by the [chancellor](#), and that leveraging private finance is crucial for increasing energy security in the UK, the government must urgently consider the Future of Financial Services Bill and the Green Finance Strategy together .

This should be complemented through another piece of primary legislation to put the UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) on a statutory footing, establishing its powers and operational independence. Legislation for the UKIB should ensure the following.

- Public funding should be used to attract capital to new areas, operating in a flexible way and with a clear exit strategy.
- Key performance indicators should include environmental outcomes, not just financial outcomes.
- UKIB's mandate should extend to climate adaptation and resilience, nature-based solutions, nature restoration and support for the circular economy.
- UKIB should support business and local authorities to recognise the economic potential of net zero though an expert advisory function.

For more information about Green Alliance's work on private finance, please contact:
Sam Alvis, head of economy, salvis@green-alliance.org.uk

Skills

Skills and training will play a crucial role in the transition to a net zero carbon economy and delivering the green jobs of the future. Unfortunately, the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill, currently still in parliament, was a missed opportunity to bridge the government's environmental ambitions and level up by promoting and encouraging the development of green skills. The bill, which forms the legislative underpinning for education reforms set out in the government's Skills White Paper, only refers to climate and nature in the limited context of local skills plans. There is no provision to embed climate and nature within higher or further education nor set out a wider, national green skills strategy. This is despite every major sector in the UK economy facing a [major green skills gap](#).

Whilst we do not expect any further legislation on education and skills in 2022-23, the government should urgently address the green skills gap to prevent this holding back the transition to a low carbon economy. To do this, the government should design and implement a new green skills programme which supports industry, institutions and individuals. This should include:

- A national framework for green jobs that outlines the skills required for the transition and where additional efforts are required to reach environmental objectives. This will help to match supply and demand regionally and across sectors.
- Work alongside education providers and businesses to develop new courses in the green economy. To do this, providers need to understand the needs in their local area. Where there is a particular dearth of skills, providers will need strategic funding to launch new courses, especially as demand grows
- Increasing financial security for existing workers undergoing retraining. Those learning new skills will require loans, grants and maintenance support to reduce the financial risks of transferring jobs.

For more information about Green Alliance's work on skills, please contact:
[James Fotherby, policy adviser, jfotherby@green-alliance.org.uk](mailto:jfotherby@green-alliance.org.uk)

Levelling Up Bill

A Planning Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech in 2021, with the aim of transforming the current planning system.

Green Alliance was among [18 organisations](#) to call for planning reform that centres on nature, climate and people in all home building and infrastructure decisions. Planning reforms should ensure that every home has easy access, via public transport, walking and cycling, to amenities, green spaces and local workplaces, while cutting pollution and helping the UK meet its net zero target.

Following an announcement by the Secretary of State Michael Gove in February 2022, it is now expected that elements of the Planning Bill will instead be incorporated into a Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill likely to include support for regeneration of economically disadvantaged areas and requirements for annual reporting on levelling up. The planning clauses of the bill should:

- Ensure action to tackle embodied carbon in buildings (which refers to emissions associated with construction materials and processes, including demolition). These emissions should be addressed by establishing a presumption in favour of refurbishment and a requirement for any planning application proposing demolition of an existing building to demonstrate that reuse of the existing structure was first explored.
- Strengthen building regulations to require developers to measure and reduce whole life carbon.
- Establish a requirement for all new developments to be located and designed to facilitate zero transport emissions, and that low carbon transport infrastructure should be available from day one of residency, to avoid the need to rely on or purchase a car.

For more information about Green Alliance's work on planning and levelling up, please contact: Caterina Brandmayr, head of climate policy, cbrandmayr@green-alliance.org.uk

Resource use

The resources and waste strategy for England has been beset by delays and watering down of ambition. Strong targets this year would provide the impetus needed to regain momentum, but they are so far lacking.

England is becoming a laggard on resources policy. Compared to Scotland and Wales, the government proposes to adopt a weaker definition of 'producer pays' in its new regulations on extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging and also plans to exclude glass from the future deposit return scheme (DRS). Forty out of 45 schemes operating globally include glass, with Germany also using DRS for refill and reuse.

Strong, legally binding targets on resources and waste would drive progress. Instead, the government has side stepped the opportunity to set a target on resource use and has, instead, proposed a single target on residual waste reduction per capita, excluding construction waste. The target ignores the upstream impacts of resource use and lacks ambition, as it is based on achieving a recycling rate by 2042 which has already been achieved in parts of Wales, and which will not provide any incentive for increasing repair, reuse or remanufacturing.

Important goals for legislation include:

- The introduction of legally binding targets that directly drive resource consumption reduction in important sectors and provide incentives for circular economy measures, beyond recycling.
- Ensuring England's new EPR and DRS regulations have, at least, the same degree of ambition as Scotland and Wales, and ideally support refills and reuse.
- Greater ambition on support for durability, repair, reuse and remanufacturing in new EPR regulations for waste electricals and electronic equipment (WEEE).
- No further delays on these and other elements of the resources and waste strategy, including the work on consistent recycling collections and food waste.
- Ensuring, through an emissions trading scheme and reforms to landfill tax, that waste incineration (including energy from waste) is covered by a residual waste tax or a carbon price, to support residual waste reduction.
- Reducing the rate of VAT on repairs and refurbishment.

**For more information about Green Alliance's work on resource use, please contact:
Susan Evans, interim head of resource policy, sevans@green-alliance.org.uk**

Nature and farming

We are expecting a nature bill to be announced in the Queen's Speech. This would provide an opportunity to build on the new environmental governance framework, introduced by the Environment Act 2021, to deliver strengthened outcomes for nature. It is also expected to implement the recommendations of the Glover review of protected landscapes.

The war in Ukraine has pushed the issue of food and farming to the top of the political agenda. Russia's control of global fertiliser supplies has destabilised global food security. To address this, the government should prioritise reducing fertiliser use, while maintaining yields, aiming eventually to replace fossil-based fertiliser with lower carbon alternatives. Doubling down on net zero carbon emissions in this sector and restoring nature will increase food security by restoring the cornerstones of food production: air, water, climate, soil and pollinators.

The government must strengthen and expand the reforms it began after the UK left the European Union through the Environmental Land Management Schemes. It should also support the transition to a more sustainable farming system, less dependent on Russian control of fertilisers.

Important goals for legislation, embodied in a proposed food bill in response to the National Food Strategy, include:

- New rules for food procurement to ensure the state only buys low carbon, high nature value, healthy food. This would support British farmers and better diets.

- Mandatory reporting for supermarkets about the types of food they sell, so everyone can understand the health, nature and carbon impacts of food they buy. This would be analogous to the mandatory carbon reporting which helped investors encourage companies to develop zero carbon technology.
- A new reference diet (ie an update of the ‘eatwell plate’) which provides scientific guidance on what a healthy and nature-positive diet looks like. This would form the scientific basis of new food procurement rules.
- A duty on the Food Standards Agency to regularly report on how the nation’s diets are supporting progress to health, nature and carbon goals, with a focus on what food companies are doing to help people eat healthier, nature-positive diets.

For more information about Green Alliance’s work on nature and farming, please contact: James Elliott, senior policy adviser, jelliott@green-alliance.org.uk

For more information about this briefing contact

Holly Rowden, policy adviser, Green Alliance
hrowden@green-alliance.org.uk