**Inquiry: core tasks of select committees**
**Written evidence from Green Alliance**

1. Green Alliance is an independent think tank and charity focused on ambitious leadership for the environment. Since 1979, we have been working with the most influential leaders in business, NGOs and politics to accelerate political action and create transformative policy for a green, equitable and prosperous UK.

2. This submission recommends making post-legislative scrutiny an explicit core task for select committees, embedding engagement with people who have lived experience in committee practice, and strengthening parliamentary scrutiny of significant public appointments.

**Question 1. Is the current list of select committee core tasks still fit for purpose? If not, what changes might be required?**
**Question 2. Purpose: How can the select committee core tasks better reflect the prime purpose of select committees, which is to promote better outcomes, greater state effectiveness, and contribute to improved public confidence in our democratic system?**
**Question 3. Policy: Work undertaken by previous Liaison Committees has underlined the importance of committees' roles in scrutinising policy formulation and strategic thinking in Government. How might the core tasks better reflect this role?**

**3. The list of select committee core tasks does not expressly include post-legislative scrutiny,** although Task 9 does include examining the implementation of legislation and major policy initiatives. The core tasks cover policy proposals, emerging or deficient policy, draft bills and specific departmental outputs, but do not identify systematic examination of whether Acts of Parliament have been implemented effectively or achieved Parliament's intended outcomes. **Post-legislative scrutiny should therefore be made an explicit core task.**[1]

4. The Cabinet Office's Guide to Making Legislation sets out a process under which the responsible department normally prepares a post-legislative assessment three to five years after Royal Assent and submits it to the relevant House of Commons departmental select committee(s).[2] The memorandum is intended to help the committee to decide whether fuller scrutiny is needed. While this is a useful trigger, it leaves the initiative largely with government departments and does not guarantee that a committee will test the memorandum, seek independent evidence or follow up any shortcomings.

5. Committees should approach this responsibility more consistently and proactively. At the start of each Parliament, each departmental committee should publish a rolling register of Acts within its remit, expected departmental memoranda and proposed scrutiny dates. It should ask departments for a timetable, challenge unjustified omissions or delays, and select Acts for proportionate follow-up according to public impact, implementation risk, use of delegated powers and evidence that intended outcomes are not being achieved. A summary of progress on post-legislative scrutiny should be included in committees' end of session reports.

6. We recognise that select committees do not have limitless budgets. However, post-legislative scrutiny can take different forms and need not always require a full inquiry: correspondence, stakeholder roundtables, information requests or a focused evidence session may be sufficient, but every memorandum should at the least receive a recorded committee decision, and any recommendations should be followed up.

7. On environmental legislation, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee has taken a more systemic approach to the scrutiny of post-implementation reviews of secondary legislation, but to date has not replicated this approach for primary legislation.[3]

8. In 2026 Defra published post-legislative assessments on two important post-Brexit Acts, the Agriculture Act 2020 and the Fisheries Act 2020. No dedicated scrutiny was done on the former. Environmental non-governmental organisations asked the EFRA Committee to undertake dedicated scrutiny of the Fisheries Act memorandum. No response has been received to this request.[4]

9. Our analysis of the Fisheries Act identified uneven implementation, delays in Fisheries Management Plans, fragmented approaches across administrations, and weaknesses in transparency, monitoring and the practical effect of the Act's sustainability objectives. A departmental assessment alone cannot resolve such contested questions; committee-led scrutiny can however test the government's account against independent expertise and the experience of affected stakeholders, and determine whether implementation, policy or legislation needs to change.[5]

10. In other cases, select committees have taken a more proactive approach to post-legislative scrutiny. For example:

- The Justice Committee set out its views on how the Ministry of Justice should approach post-legislative scrutiny, which resulted in a departmental response setting out indicative timelines for publishing post-legislative scrutiny memoranda and explaining where scrutiny was considered disproportionate.[6,7]
- The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee conducted a dedicated inquiry into the Lobbying Act 2014 after the government's assessment, taking evidence and making recommendations on whether the statutory framework was working as intended.[8]
- The House of Lords has continued to use special inquiry committees for intensive reviews of individual Acts, including the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

11. Making post-legislative scrutiny an explicit core task would encourage this good practice to become routine across committees, strengthen institutional memory and close the accountability gap between Parliament passing legislation and assessing whether it works.

**Question 5. Are any changes in standard working practices needed to help committees effectively deliver the core tasks? If so, what might they be?**

**12. Committees should receive evidence from and engage more consistently with people who have lived experience of the issues they scrutinise.** Green Alliance and Impact on Urban Health facilitated a visit by members of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee to Lambeth and Southwark as part of its inquiry into air pollution in England. Members visited a primary school, a construction site and the Tustin Estate, and met residents, campaigners, medical professionals and community leaders at the Dene Community Centre.[9]

13. The visit brought evidence to life that can be difficult to capture through written submissions or formal oral evidence alone. Communities described feeling ignored or dismissed despite bearing a disproportionate share of pollution and its health impacts. They raised the low priority given to air pollution as a public health hazard, pollution from construction, the need for better education and monitoring, and the limits on local authorities' powers. They also offered practical solutions,

including closer collaboration between health professionals and pollution specialists, more community-led planning and clearer public messaging about the benefits of cleaner air.
14. Participants reported that the small-table discussions created time and space for people to be heard and enabled deeper conversations than would normally be possible in a committee room. Parliamentary staff were struck by the fatigue communities expressed and by how disconnected many people felt from Westminster. This illustrates how engagement outside Parliament can help rebuild trust, improve the quality of evidence available to committees and ensure that committee recommendations reflect the circumstances of those most affected. It is important to note that the communities also felt consultation fatigue, where they are regularly asked to share lived experience and do not often hear how the findings are being taken forward or see action based on what is shared. This reinforces the importance of meaningful engagement and space given to follow up communications.

15. Committee members likewise emphasised the value of hearing directly from residents. The Committee Chair, Toby Perkins MP, said that the visit gave members perspectives they do not always hear in Westminster and would directly inform the inquiry's recommendations. In a Westminster Hall debate shortly afterwards, Committee member Barry Gardiner MP presented air pollution as a public health emergency and argued that the public was finding its voice on this "silent, invisible killer".

16. Defra minister Stephen Morgan directly responded to this:

> "The issue goes beyond environmental policy. As many Members have confirmed, it is about fairness. The dirtiest air sits over the poorest neighbourhoods. Black and minority ethnic communities and those on low incomes are far more likely to be exposed to air pollution while contributing the least to it."[10]

17. The progression from community visit to parliamentary debate to ministerial statement demonstrates the wider benefit of this approach: lived experience can shape committee members' understanding, give greater visibility to inequalities that aggregate evidence may obscure, and be carried into formal parliamentary scrutiny of ministers. Committees should therefore treat visits and deliberative engagement with affected communities as a routine part of inquiry planning, with sufficient time and support for participants and a clear explanation of how their evidence has influenced conclusions and recommendations.

18. Committees should also ensure that communities who are disproportionately affected by an issue should be represented in those giving evidence to the committee. While community visits can and should be a helpful part of committees' standard working practices, this should not preclude community members, including those from low income and racialised communities, being represented in formal evidence sessions. The Liaison Committee's report on the diversity of select committee witnesses shows that further progress is needed on this.[11]

**Question 7. What role should select committees play in the scrutiny of public appointments?**

**19. Select committees should scrutinise significant public appointments before, during and after appointment.** This would enable parliamentarians to examine each key stage of the process, build constructive relationships with appointees and assess whether they are fulfilling the legal responsibilities and parliamentary expectations attached to their roles.

20. The scrutiny by the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee and the EFRA Committee of the appointment and subsequent work of the first two Chairs of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) demonstrates the value of this approach.

21. The OEP's independence attracted considerable parliamentary attention and was a central issue in debates in both Houses during the passage of its founding legislation, the Environment Bill.[12]

22. Pre-appointment scrutiny remains essential for roles such as Chair of the OEP, where institutional independence is critical. In November 2025, the Environmental Audit Committee and external stakeholders expressed concern that the government's proposed role description for the Chair placed too much emphasis on infrastructure development. This risked compromising the Chair's ability to challenge government policy independently where it conflicted with environmental protection.[13]

23. The government subsequently revised the specification, strengthening independence and engagement with Parliament in the essential criteria and adding environmental policy and practice to the desirable criteria.

24. This intervention shows that timely committee scrutiny can:

- Identify weaknesses in a recruitment brief before they become embedded in an appointment
- Clarify the qualities Parliament expects of an office holder, including, in this case, demonstrable independence from ministers and environmental expertise
- Require ministers to explain their approach and encourage them to improve it
- Strengthen public confidence that appointments to important watchdogs reflect the body's statutory purpose rather than short term government priorities

25. The two environment committees then held a pre-appointment hearing with the government's preferred candidate for Chair of the OEP, enabling them to test the candidate's suitability thoroughly.

26. Following appointment, the Chair appears regularly before both committees to report on the OEP's progress in holding government to account. This evidence can, in turn, inform and strengthen the committees' wider scrutiny.

27. Engagement before, during and after an appointment enables committees to build constructive relationships with appointees from the outset while maintaining effective oversight.

28. Finally, the UK Parliament should consider evidence from other legislatures that more active parliamentary involvement can strengthen oversight of public appointments. For example, when appointing the Chair of the Office of Environmental Governance Wales, the new Welsh counterpart to the OEP, a member of Senedd Cymru's Climate Change, Environment, Sustainability and Rural Affairs Committee must be invited to join the panel that recommends appointments to Welsh ministers.[14]

Green Alliance, 28 October 2026

---

[1] The core tasks of select committees, Liaison Committee annual report for 2002.
[2] Cabinet Office, Guide to Making Legislation, 2025.
[3] Correspondence between the Department for Environment, Rural Affairs and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee: letters 26 April 2023; 30 June 2023; 8 February 2024; 29 October 2024; 10 April 2025.

[4] Letter from Green Alliance, ClientEarth and Oceana to the EFRA Committee, 1 September 2026.
[5] UK fisheries policy five years after Brexit, Green Alliance, 20 January 2026.
[6] Letter from the Justice Committee to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, 14 July 2026.
[7] Letter from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice to the Justice Committee, 16 September 2026.
[8] Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Lobbying and Influence: post-legislative scrutiny of the Lobbying Act 2014 and related matters, 30 April 2024.
[9] Environmental Audit Committee news article, 11 June 2026.
[10] Hansard, Westminster Hall debate on air pollution, 2 July 2026.
[11] Liaison Committee, report on the diversity of select committee witnesses, 14 October 2026.
[12] Green Alliance blog, 'The new Office for Environmental Protection has its work cut out', 24 January 2022.
[13] Letter from Toby Perkins MP to Defra minister Mary Creagh, 20 November 2025.
[14] Paragraph 8(4)(a), Schedule 1, Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Act 2026.