

People and Nature: Environment Bill Briefing for MPs November 2020

Introduction to People and Nature

[People and Nature](#) is a **cross-party parliamentary campaign** launched in July 2019 to urge UK Government to address the **threats posed by biodiversity loss to sustainable development and poverty reduction** goals.

The overarching objective of the campaign is the **establishment of a joined-up approach to biodiversity, climate and development** ('The Triple Challenge') across the entirety of the UK's domestic and international policy-making agenda. We have **three key asks** of government to achieve this:

- ❖ Ensure that all **UK Aid is nature-positive and climate-smart**.
- ❖ **Stop harmful investments** that destroy nature and contribute to climate change.
- ❖ Negotiate an **ambitious deal for People and Nature** at the Convention on Biological Diversity's upcoming COP15 meeting.

The Environment Bill

- ❖ With just weeks until the transition period concludes and an environmental governance gap opens, the Environment Bill has finally returned to Parliament.
- ❖ Unfortunately, the Bill still falls far short of the world-leading environmental legislation that had been hoped for.
- ❖ In particular, **the Bill currently fails to address the UK's global footprint** and therefore misses a key opportunity to mitigate the human and environmental costs of UK consumption.
- ❖ However, **there is still time for the Bill to be strengthened**.
- ❖ One key way in which the Bill could be amended to address the environmental and development impact of the UK's consumption of commodities is through the introduction of a **due diligence obligation placing a legal duty on UK businesses and financial institutions to eliminate negative environmental and social impacts from their supply chains**.

The scale of biodiversity loss and the UK's global footprint

- ❖ [41% of UK species](#) have declined since 1970 and species populations globally have declined by an average of [68%](#) in the same period, with around 1 million animal and plant species globally now threatened with extinction (IPBES, 2018).
- ❖ The key driver of terrestrial nature loss is land use change, particularly the conversion of pristine ecosystems to agriculture, while overfishing is the key threat to marine life.
- ❖ A total overseas area equivalent to [88% of the UK landmass](#) was required between 2016 and 2018 to supply UK demand for just seven key commodities - beef and leather, cocoa, palm oil, pulp and paper, rubber, soy and timber. This represents a 15% increase in footprint since the period 2011-15 due to increasing demand for agricultural and forestry products.

What does this mean for people and nature?

- ❖ The destruction of nature in the UK and around the world is an environmental and moral issue, but it is also an **economic and development issue**.^{1,2}

¹ Roe, D, Seddon, N, and Elliott, J, (2019) Biodiversity loss is a development issue: a rapid review of evidence. IIED Issue Paper.

² Pettengell, C. (2020) Addressing the Triple Emergency: Poverty, Climate Change and Environmental Degradation. BOND-DEG.

- ❖ **Nature is at the heart of all human survival and wellbeing** – from the air we breathe to the water we drink, to the soil we use to grow our food, as well as protection from climate change and natural disasters.
- ❖ **We all depend on these goods and services but the poorest are most directly reliant on them** – 90% of the world’s poorest people depend on biological resources for food, fuel, medicine, shelter and transportation³ and are often unable to replace these previously freely available natural resources once they disappear.
- ❖ **The Covid-19 pandemic has provided another stark reminder of our interdependence with the natural world** – according to [IPBES](#), reducing risk drivers such as deforestation, land conversion and the unsafe wildlife trade is the only way to escape the ‘era of pandemics’.
- ❖ However, the safety net which natural resources provide to many of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people has now been stretched to breaking point – IPBES⁴ have warned **socioeconomic pressures caused by land and ocean degradation alongside climate change impacts will undermine the wellbeing of 3.2 billion people.**
- ❖ While the link between poverty and climate is by now fairly well-known, **the link between biodiversity loss and worsening development outcomes is still frequently overlooked⁵**, receiving a fraction of the political attention and funding^{6,7}.
- ❖ The reality is that **biodiversity loss, climate change and poverty are inextricably connected⁸ and can only be effectively addressed with a holistic, joined-up approach** to policy-making which acknowledges and mitigates trade-offs and unintentional consequences.

Why is the Environment Bill a key moment?

- ❖ The UK is at present **both establishing new environmental, agricultural and trade legislation** and also **preparing to host next year’s COP26 climate conference.**
- ❖ This combination of events presents **major opportunities to establish a more effective joined-up approach which addresses all of the social and environmental impacts of our domestic and global resource footprint.**
- ❖ However, by remaining silent on global footprint, the UK’s flagship Environment Bill currently misses one of the key means of ensuring this.
- ❖ With the Bill’s return to Parliament, it must be strengthened so that it acknowledges and addresses the entirety of the UK’s global impact on people and nature and provides an ambitious roadmap for others to follow.
- ❖ Specifically, the Bill must be amended to address negative human and environmental impacts of the UK’s commodity consumption by establishing a **Due Diligence Obligation which would place a legal duty on UK businesses and financial institutions to eliminate negative environmental and social impacts from their supply chains.**
- ❖ The Government’s recent announcement of a [consultation](#) on due diligence legislation for products associated with illegal deforestation was a welcome first step, their proposal does not go far enough. Firstly, this should be enacted through the Environment Bill. Additionally, in light of widespread repeal of environmental

³ CBD (2010) Biodiversity, development and poverty alleviation. Recognising the role of biodiversity for human wellbeing.

⁴ IPBES (2018) Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration

⁵ Roe et al (2019) Biodiversity loss is a development issue, IIED (<https://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/17636IIED.pdf>)

⁶ OECD (2020) A Comprehensive Overview of Global Biodiversity Finance.

⁷ Buchner et al. (2019) Global Landscape of Climate Finance 2019. Climate Policy Initiative

⁸ <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2020/06/the-triple-emergency-environmental-degradation-climate-change-and-poverty>

protection laws around the world, the obligation must cover all unsustainable production, not just that which is illegal under local law.

How can MPs help protect both people and nature?

- ❖ By calling on colleagues and the Government to **strengthen the Environment Bill** so that it **tackles the UK's global environmental footprint and demonstrates genuine leadership** ahead of next year's international climate and nature summits, and by **supporting amendments** which seek to do this, for example by introducing a due diligence obligation.
- ❖ By **using the Environment Bill debate as an opportunity to highlight the urgent need for UK Government to address our global footprint and establish a joined-up approach** to tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and poverty.
- ❖ By calling on the Government also to **respond in full to the list of [recommendations made by the Global Resource Initiative](#)** to reduce the climate and environment effects of key UK supply chains and support the rights and livelihoods of the people dependent on forest ecosystems.
- ❖ By getting in touch if you would like a **more detailed briefing** on any of these issues from People and Nature's **expert Steering Committee**⁹ or if you require further talking points, draft parliamentary questions or support with any other planned interventions.
- ❖ **By contacting Costanza Poggi (cpoggi@seahorseenvironmental.co.uk) if you would be interested in adding your name as a [supporter](#) of the campaign.**

Contact

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⁹ The People and Nature campaign is coordinated by Seahorse Environmental, reporting to the People and Nature Steering Committee: Dr Mike Barrett (WWF), Dr Tom Clements (Wildlife Conservation Society), Jo Elliott (Fauna and Flora international), Graham Gordon (CAFOD), Dr Dilys Roe (International Institute for Environment and Development) and Katherine Kramer (Christian Aid). We are supported by [MPs from 5 parliamentary parties](#).