



House of Commons  
Environmental Audit Committee

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# Environmental audit in the 2019 Parliament

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**Eighth Report of Session 2023–24**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the Report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 23 May 2024*

## Environmental Audit Committee

The Environmental Audit Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to consider to what extent the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development; to audit their performance against such targets as may be set for them by His Majesty's Ministers; and to report thereon to the House.

### Current membership

[Philip Dunne MP](#) (*Conservative, Ludlow*) (Chair)

[Duncan Baker MP](#) (*Conservative, North Norfolk*)

[Sir Christopher Chope MP](#) (*Conservative, Christchurch*)

[Barry Gardiner MP](#) (*Labour, Brent North*)

[James Gray MP](#) (*Conservative, North Wiltshire*)

[Chris Grayling MP](#) (*Conservative, Epsom and Ewell*)

[Ian Levy MP](#) (*Conservative, Blyth Valley*)

[Clive Lewis MP](#) (*Labour, Norwich South*)

[Caroline Lucas MP](#) (*Green Party, Brighton, Pavilion*)

[Cherilyn Mackrory MP](#) (*Conservative, Truro and Falmouth*)

[Jerome Mayhew MP](#) (*Conservative, Broadland*)

[Anna McMorrin MP](#) (*Labour, Cardiff North*)

[John McNally MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Falkirk*)

[Dr Matthew Offord MP](#) (*Conservative, Hendon*)

[Cat Smith MP](#) (*Labour, Lancaster and Fleetwood*)

[Claudia Webbe MP](#) (*Independent, Leicester East*)

The following Members were also members of the Committee during the current Parliament:

Dan Carden MP (*Labour, Liverpool, Walton*); Feryal Clark MP (*Labour, Enfield North*); Sir Robert Goodwill MP (*Conservative, Scarborough and Whitby*); Helen Hayes MP (*Labour, Dulwich and West Norwood*); Marco Longhi MP (*Conservative, Dudley North*); Kerry McCarthy MP (*Labour, Bristol East*); Chris Skidmore MP (*Conservative, Kingswood*); Alex Sobel MP (*Labour (Co-op), Leeds North West*); Mr Shailesh Vara MP (*Conservative, North West Cambridgeshire*); Valerie Vaz MP (*Labour, Walsall South*); Nadia Whittome MP (*Labour, Nottingham East*).

### Powers

The constitution and powers are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152A. These are available on the internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publications

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### **Committee Staff**

Dawn Amey (Committee Specialist), Martyn Atkins (Clerk), Izzy Davis (POST Fellow), Alexander Farnsworth (Committee Specialist), Laura Fatah (Committee Specialist), Rebecca Lees (Second Clerk), Jacob Moreton (Senior Media and Communications Officer), Gary O'Key (Committee Specialist), Ben Smith (Committee Operations Officer) and Jonathan Wright (Committee Operations Manager).

The following also assisted the Committee during the 2019 Parliament:

Lloyd Owen (Clerk); Medha Bhasin, Sara Elkhawad and Chris Watson (Second Clerks); Nicholas Davies (Senior Specialist); Laura Grant (Committee Specialist); †Jim Camp, Katie Gibbs and Sascha Sajjad (Committee Operations Officers); Chloe Jago (Senior Media and Communications Officer); Andrew Bax, Amy Brew and Emma Wilding (Committee Specialists seconded from the National Audit Office); Humera Ansari, Fraser Baird, Jon Davies, Mahika Dixit, Lydia Franklins, Bronwen Hunter, Caitlin Lewis, Kirsty MacLeod, Carrie Soderman and Kerry Stewart (POST Fellows); and Marc Geddes (Parliamentary Research Fellow).

### **Contacts**

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You can follow the Committee on X (formerly Twitter) using [@CommonsEAC](https://twitter.com/CommonsEAC).

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## About this report

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1. The Environmental Audit Committee is appointed by the House to consider the extent to which the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development, and to audit their performance against sustainable development and environmental protection targets set by Ministers. In this report we set out in summary how the Committee, appointed in February 2020, has sought to pursue this remit during the 2019 Parliament.

2. During this Parliament the Committee has:

- made 23 reports to the House;
- published 18 Government responses to its reports, including responses to two reports issued in the 2017 Parliament;
- published 34 letters sent from the Chair to Cabinet Ministers on issues arising from the Committee's scrutiny work;
- held 178 meetings, 146 of which were to take oral evidence from witnesses;
- published 2231 submissions of written evidence;
- heard from Secretaries of State on 11 occasions and departmental Ministers, from 11 separate departments, on 44 occasions;<sup>1</sup>
- taken evidence from 622 other witnesses;
- held evidence sessions to examine the work of the Office for Environmental Protection, the Environment Agency and Natural England and the contribution they make to the Government's environmental targets, together with sessions to examine the Climate Change Committee on its annual progress reports to Parliament on emissions reduction and adaptation to climate change;
- held (jointly with the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee) two pre-appointment hearings to assess the suitability for appointment of candidates which Ministers planned to appoint to the chairs of public bodies, and participated (via the Chair) in a pre-appointment hearing held by the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee;
- met jointly with the Environment and Climate Change Committee of the House of Lords on two occasions to question Ministers on the UK's contribution to the 15th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) and the resultant Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,<sup>2</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> The departments whose Ministers gave evidence to the Committee are the Cabinet Office, the Department for Education, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (formerly the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government), the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, the Department for Transport, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, HM Treasury, and the Ministry of Defence.

<sup>2</sup> The two joint oral evidence sessions were held on [20 June 2022](#) and [18 January 2023](#).

- with the assistance of the National Audit Office, continued the Committee's work on the sustainability of the Government estate, examining the sustainability of the Ministry of Defence and of the Department for Education.

3. In the chapters below we summarise the principal themes we have pursued in our work during this Parliament, and the way in which we have sought to examine how the Government is fulfilling its policies on the environment and on climate change. We also indicate the work which we were undertaking at the point that the dissolution of Parliament was announced. The narrative summary below is not of course exhaustive. Further detail on our work is to be found in the reports we have made to the House and the correspondence we have published.<sup>3</sup>

4. We make this report to the House for its information. We pass it on to the committee to be appointed later in 2024 as a summary of the work we have undertaken in the four years since this Committee was appointed by the House in February 2020. All the oral and written evidence we have taken in our inquiries has been reported to the House and will be available to our successors as they determine their work programme for the 2024 Parliament.

5. We wish to place on record our appreciation not just for the work of the staff in the House of Commons Select Committee Team who have supported our work over the course of the Parliament, but also for the assistance provided by other parliamentary bodies.<sup>4</sup> The National Audit Office has undertaken several studies to support our inquiries<sup>5</sup> and has arranged for its staff to join our staff team on secondment, while the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) has arranged for participants in its fellowship schemes to join our staff team on attachment. In January 2023 Professor Tamsin Edwards, Professor in Climate Change at King's College London, was appointed as the first Parliamentary Thematic Research Lead for Climate and Environment: her advice on the use of research evidence has significantly benefitted our scrutiny work.

6. Over the course of the Parliament, we have been privileged to be supported by several specialist advisers: Jamie Anderson, Professor Ian Barker, Professor Mark Brandon MBE, Dr Edmund Hughes, Tom Johnson, Dr Radhika Khosla, Dr Richard Lowes, Professor Mark Maslin, Dr Nicole Miranda, Maf Smith, Simon Sturgis and Professor Jim Watson. We are most grateful to them all for their expertise and time.

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3 The Committee's publications are listed on its website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/62/environmental-audit-committee/publications/>.

4 A list of House of Commons staff who have served on the Committee team in this Parliament is included in the front matter of this report.

5 A list of the studies commissioned from the National Audit Office by the Committee is annexed to this report.

# 1 Environmental protection

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## The Environment Act 2021

7. The Committee in the 2017 Parliament undertook pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill.<sup>6</sup> This bill, published in draft in December 2018, contained the Government’s proposed measures for maintenance of environmental standards after the UK’s departure from the European Union. The Government’s revised legislative proposal—the Environment Bill—was introduced to Parliament in January 2020 and received Royal Assent in November 2021.<sup>7</sup>

8. Much of our scrutiny of environmental matters in this Parliament has concerned the provisions of what is now the Environment Act 2021 and how they have been implemented to date. These provisions include the establishment of: long-term targets for improving the environment; an Office for Environmental Protection to monitor and advise on the implementation of environmental law, enforce against breaches of the law and track progress against environmental targets; and statutory environmental principles to guide policymakers across Government.

### *Long-term environmental targets*

9. The Environment Act requires Ministers to set long-term targets in four priority areas, namely air quality, water, biodiversity and resource efficiency and waste reduction. Following consultation, Ministers published a suite of targets in December 2022. In January 2023 the Government designated an Environmental Improvement Plan under the Environment Act, in succession to its initial plan issued in 2018: in that plan Ministers set out how they intended to achieve these targets.

10. The targets designated under the Environment Act are in relation to fine particulate matter in the air; marine protected areas; water quality and sufficiency; residual waste; biodiversity, and woodland. The date by which each of the targets is to be achieved varies: the earliest date falls in December 2038 (with a requirement for reporting by 2040) and the latest falls in 2050.

11. The Committee’s remit requires it to audit the Government’s performance against targets set by Ministers. The Government is yet to report formally on its progress towards any of these targets. We expect that the Office for Environmental Protection will, in future annual reports on progress in improving the natural environment in England, provide updates on progress towards them: such reports will assist our successors in the audit tasks set by the House.

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6 The Committee in the 2017 Parliament reported on the draft Bill in its Eighteenth Report of Session 2017–19, [Scrutiny of the Draft Environment \(Principles and Governance\) Bill](#), HC 1951, April 2019.

7 Details of the passage of the Bill are available on the Bill page on the Parliament website at <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2593>.

## Water quality

12. Our inquiry into *Water quality in rivers*, on which we reported in January 2022, examined the factors which have collectively resulted in poor ecological status for 86% of the rivers in England. These include unauthorised discharges from the sewerage network; agricultural practices which result in excessive discharge of phosphates and nitrates into waterways; and failure to keep damaging materials in runoff from highways and poor urban drainage from entering the river network. The impact of the report on water management policy was recognised by the Institution of Civil Engineers, which awarded the Committee its Chris Binnie Award for Sustainable Water Management for 2022.

13. Our work to address the factors contributing to poor water quality has continued. Following our representations to the Secretary of State, the Government's strategic guidance to Ofwat issued in February 2022 established protection and enhancement of the environment as an objective for the body to pursue in its regulation of the water sector.<sup>8</sup> In May 2024 we held a follow-up evidence session with industry representatives, campaigners, the sector regulator Ofwat and the responsible Minister to examine progress against the recommendations we had made in 2022.<sup>9</sup> Enforcement of measures to protect water quality was also a feature of the accountability hearing we held with the Chair and Chief Executive of the Environment Agency in April 2024.<sup>10</sup>

14. In October 2023, water companies submitted business plans to Ofwat for the next asset management period (2025–2030), outlining a £96 billion investment programme. This represents a significant increase in overall investment compared to previous asset management periods, including for environmental improvements which the Committee advocated in 2022. For example, £21 billion is proposed for the Water Industry National Environment Programme, representing approximately four times the current level of expenditure, and £10.7 billion is proposed for storm overflows, approximately three times current expenditure. With this proposed investment, water companies aim to meet the Government's targets to reduce discharges from storm overflows. In our report on *Water quality in rivers*, we called on Ministers and the Environment Agency to set challenging improvement targets and timetables to drive down the adverse impact on water quality from storm overflows.

## Air quality

15. Our short inquiry into outdoor and indoor air quality targets, which took place in the summer of 2023, set out to examine whether the Government's strategy and targets for air quality—recently enhanced with new targets for fine particulate matter and a population exposure reduction target—were sufficient to reduce the damage which poor air quality causes to human health and to the environment.<sup>11</sup> Much of the evidence which we took suggested that the target for fine particulate matter set under the Environment Act was not stretching enough by comparison with targets recommended by the World Health

8 The Chair wrote to the Secretary of State on 21 October 2021 concerning the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs consultation on the [draft Strategic Priority Statement for Ofwat](#).

9 Oral evidence taken before the Environmental Audit Committee on [Water quality and water infrastructure: follow-up](#), 15 May 2024, HC 721

10 Oral evidence taken before the Environmental Audit Committee on [The environmental protection work of the Environment Agency](#), 24 April 2024, HC 702

11 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7686/outdoor-and-indoor-air-quality-targets/>.



Organisation. The Government assigns responsibility for implementing many air quality control measures to local authorities: we heard that authorities were typically neither sufficiently well-resourced, nor had the necessary powers, to implement the measures required to the full.

16. Shortly after we concluded taking evidence in this inquiry, the Mayor of London introduced an Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) applying to all boroughs in Greater London: drivers of petrol and diesel vehicles which do not meet the ULEZ standards for tailpipe emissions are required to pay a charge for each day the vehicle is driven within the zone. The effect of this measure on air quality in Greater London, and consequently on human health and the environment, is likely to be keenly evaluated over the next Parliament.

### *Residual waste*

17. In the spring of 2021 we undertook a short review of the Government's proposals to introduce a deposit return scheme for drinks containers in England, in parallel with the consultation Ministers were undertaking on the subject, and questioned the responsible Minister on the Government's response to the consultation.<sup>12</sup> We are disappointed to note that implementation of this important measure has been repeatedly postponed.

18. Similarly we were disappointed to note the very limited nature of the Government's proposals to address electronic waste, which were significantly less ambitious than the measures we proposed in our December 2020 report on *Electronic waste and the circular economy*. We sought further evidence on the current scale of the environmental and sustainability challenge presented by the disposal of electronic goods, and the likely impact of the Government's proposals, in a follow-up session in April 2024.<sup>13</sup>

19. We heard in February 2023 that the implementation of the textile waste strand of the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy was being delayed. The impact on sustainability and on the environment of the fast fashion sector has been a concern of ours, as it was for the Committee in the 2017 Parliament, and we have held several evidence sessions following up on the issues raised in that Committee's *Fixing Fashion* report. The impact of the sector's practices on subcontracted labour in the UK and overseas, and the Government's measures to reduce the environmental impact of disposable fashion, remain a pressing concern.

### *Biodiversity*

20. The protection and enhancement of levels of biodiversity at home and abroad was the theme of a major inquiry undertaken by the Committee in 2020 and 2021, which resulted in two reports to the House. Biodiversity issues also underpinned our 2020 inquiry into how the UK could achieve a nature-positive economic recovery from the Covid pandemic. We continued our examination of biodiversity issues with subsequent inquiries into the

12 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1048/next-steps-for-deposit-return-schemes/>.

13 Oral evidence taken before the Environmental Audit Committee on [Electronic waste and the circular economy: follow-up](#), 17 April 2024, HC 675

sustainable use of timber in the UK, the UK's contribution to efforts to address global deforestation, and into the role of natural capital in the green economy and as a means to drive nature recovery.

### *Woodland*

21. In our 2023 inquiry examining the sustainability of the timber industry in England and the impact of the UK on deforestation overseas we investigated the Government's progress towards its targets for tree planting and woodland restoration in England.

### *Environmental governance*

#### *The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)*

22. The Office for Environmental Protection was established in shadow form in January 2021 and was vested with its statutory functions under the Environment Act in December of that year. In December 2020, together with the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee we held a pre-appointment hearing with Dame Glenys Stacey, the Government's preferred candidate to chair the OEP. Since the OEP's vesting we have held regular sessions with its Chair and Chief Executive to discuss its work in monitoring environmental law and progress towards Government targets for the environment. We have appreciated the frank, open and transparent manner in which the OEP has dealt with us since its establishment: the scrutiny arrangements which have developed over the course of the Parliament have benefitted public understanding of the OEP's role and the work it undertakes in respect of the environment. The OEP is to review its strategy over the coming year: Dame Glenys Stacey has indicated that the Office would welcome the Committee's observations on the review.

23. Despite the concerns raised during the passage of the then Environment Bill, it is clear to us that the OEP is demonstrating its independence from the Government. One way in which this is becoming apparent is in certain tensions which have been identified between the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the OEP, with particular respect to the provision of data from the Department to the OEP. We encourage the Department to support the OEP by providing the data it needs to carry out its statutory functions.

### *Environmental principles*

24. The Environment Act restates in UK law a set of environmental principles which had informed the development, implementation and enforcement of EU environmental law.<sup>14</sup> The Act requires the Secretary of State to prepare a statement setting out how the environmental principles should be interpreted and proportionately applied by Ministers of the Crown when making policy. In 2022 we examined the draft statement proposed by Ministers and reported our view on how the draft ought to be amended: the Government replied in October 2022. The policy statement entered into force in January 2023.

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14 The environmental principles are set out in [section 17\(5\) of the Environment Act 2021](#). They are: the principle that environmental protection should be integrated into the making of policies; the principle of preventative action to avert environmental damage; the precautionary principle, so far as relating to the environment; the principle that environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source, and the polluter pays principle.

### **Post-legislative review**

25. The UK's departure from the European Union, and the subsequent implementation of the provisions of the Environment Act, have both had a significant effect on the basis for environmental law in England and across the UK. In our view there is a compelling case for the operation of the Act to be reviewed early in the new Parliament, to examine whether its provisions are functioning as Ministers claimed they would during the passage of the Bill, and as Parliament intended them to.

26. *We recommend that, not later than the end of the first session of the new Parliament, Ministers issue a memorandum reporting on the principal elements of the implementation and operation of the Environment Act 2021, to inform post-legislative scrutiny of that Act during the Parliament.*

27. It will be for our successor Committee to decide whether it wishes to undertake the post-legislative scrutiny we envisage, and how that scrutiny ought to be proceeded with.

28. We have also undertaken what has in effect been a post-legislative review of implementation of the Government's legislation on the registration, authorisation and evaluation of chemicals on the UK market (UK REACH), following the repeal of the legislative provisions which applied the European Union's REACH Directive to the UK. We have corresponded with and questioned Ministers and officials on progress in establishing successor arrangements which properly safeguard the public and the environment from the effects of harmful chemicals.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Sub-Committee on Polar Research**

29. We appointed a Sub-Committee on Polar Research in January 2023 to consider the extent to which the Government contributes to environmental protection and sustainable development through supporting scientific research into the causes and effects of climate and environmental change in the polar regions.<sup>16</sup>

#### ***The UK and the Arctic environment***

30. The Sub-Committee commenced its work with an inquiry into the UK and the Arctic environment, which included a visit by Members to the British research station in Ny-Ålesund, in Svalbard in the Arctic Circle. Committee members launched their report at the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik in Iceland, the largest international gathering concerning the Arctic, attended by more than 2,000 participants from over 60 countries.

#### ***The UK and the Antarctic environment***

31. The Sub-Committee conducted its inquiry into the UK and the Antarctic environment from July 2023 until the end of the Parliament, and visited Antarctica in what was, to our knowledge, the first ever visit by a Commons Select Committee to the continent. Further details of the visit are set out in an annex to this report.

15 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7022/progress-in-implementing-uk-reach/>.

16 Information on the Sub-Committee is available on its website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/650/environmental-audit-subcommittee-on-polar-research/>.

32. The dissolution of the current Parliament interrupted the inquiry as a report on the Sub-Committee's findings was being prepared. The written evidence received and oral evidence taken by the Sub-Committee are available on the Committee's website. Given the importance of the Antarctic environment to the overall sustainability of the planet, and the UK's leading role in research into developments in the Antarctic environment, we encourage the Committee appointed in the new Parliament to review the evidence taken and to consider preparing a report to the House on the issues it raises.

## 2 Sustainability and climate change

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### Scrutinising Government policies on climate and emissions

33. Our remit requires us to examine Government policies on sustainability and progress towards sustainability targets. In this context, the greatest sustainability challenge which the country, and the planet, faces, arises from the observable and projected changes to the Earth's climate. There is a broad political consensus on the contribution which human activity has made and is making to these climatic changes, and the catastrophic effect they may have on the environment if they continue unabated.

34. In this context the most significant headline target set by Ministers is the target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. It was given statutory effect in July 2019 by amendment to the Climate Change Act 2008. The Sixth Carbon Budget, proposed by Ministers in February 2021 and agreed to by both Houses in May 2022, was the first such budget to be prepared on the basis of a target of net zero emissions by 2050. The interim targets for net emissions which are to be met by 2037 require a steeper reduction in emissions than those required under previous carbon budgets. The High Court has ruled on two occasions that the plans to meet the Sixth Carbon Budget issued by Ministers do not meet the requirements of the Climate Change Act.

### *Mapping the path to net zero*

35. We have maintained our scrutiny of Government policies to deliver emissions reductions throughout the Parliament under a workstream entitled *Mapping the path to net zero*. In the course of this work we have taken evidence regularly from the Climate Change Committee on the findings in its annual reports to Parliament on progress in reducing emissions. We have also examined representatives of the Treasury on the outcome of its Net Zero Review and the likely implications of that review for future fiscal policy.

36. Underpinning this approach has been a concern with the operation of the machinery of Government and the delivery of net zero policies across all Government departments. The Chair has raised net zero governance issues with two Prime Ministers during their appearances before the Liaison Committee, and it was also a feature of the Committee's examination of the President-designate of COP26, Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, during his time as the Cabinet Minister with *de facto* responsibility for coordination of net zero policy.

37. In September 2023 the Prime Minister made a speech to the media in which he signalled several changes to established net zero policies, intended to achieve a more pragmatic approach to their implementation. These policy changes were announced during a parliamentary adjournment, with no prior consultation and little accompanying detail. The Chair wrote to the Prime Minister on our behalf to seek further and better particulars about each of the policy changes proposed and the rationale for them.<sup>17</sup>

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17 Letter from the Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee to the Prime Minister [concerning net zero policy announcements](#), 29 September 2023

38. On 21 May the Government published its final statement for the third carbon budget period, which ran from 2018 to 2022. The carbon budget cap for this period was set at 2,544 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO<sub>2</sub>e). UK emissions over the period, as calculated by the net UK carbon account, were 2,153 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e, 391 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e below the budget ceiling. Ministers have calculated that on average the UK's emissions, as measured by the net carbon account, were 47% lower than those in the base year of 1990; by the end of the budgetary period in 2022, UK net greenhouse gas emissions were 50% lower than base year emissions.<sup>18</sup> The Secretary of State has foregone the option to carry forward the surplus from the third carbon budget to apply against the fourth carbon budget, which will be reckoned in 2027: Ministers consider that the Government is “already on track to over-deliver once again in the fourth carbon budget without the need to carry-over.”<sup>19</sup>

### *Scrutiny of proposals for the Seventh Carbon Budget*

39. In his September 2023 speech the Prime Minister attributed some deficiencies in current net zero policies to the cursory scrutiny which the Government's proposals for the Sixth Carbon Budget had received in Parliament. On this point there is broad consensus: opportunities for the Government's proposals to be debated in either House were minimal and the timetable for approval of the Government's plans gave no opportunity for them to be examined in detail by select committees.

40. We wrote to the Secretary of State with a proposal to increase parliamentary scrutiny of the Government's proposals for the Seventh Carbon Budget, due to be adopted during 2025. We proposed that the Government publish a draft delivery plan for its carbon budget at the same time that it published the headline budget figure. Committees would then have three months to scrutinise the delivery plan and its feasibility, and issue reports as appropriate. Following that scrutiny period the Government would present its proposed budget to Parliament for adoption. Motions to approve the relevant secondary legislation would be subject to debate in the chambers of both Houses before being voted on.<sup>20</sup>

41. Our proposals were accepted by the Government: we expect that the procedure we have proposed will be followed in the next Parliament, and we encourage all select committees with an interest in decarbonisation policies to examine the Government's draft delivery plan in detail.<sup>21</sup>

***42. We recommend that our proposals for Parliamentary scrutiny of the Seventh Carbon Budget, as set out in the Chair's letter to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero of 6 February 2024, be implemented in full. We propose that the successor Committee invite the Secretary of State principally responsible for the Government's delivery plan for the Seventh Carbon Budget to discuss the Government's draft plan at an early date following its presentation to Parliament for scrutiny.***

18 Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, [Final Statement for the Third Carbon Budget: reporting UK 2018–2022 emissions to Parliament under the Climate Change Act 2008](#), May 2024.

19 Carbon Budget Update, [HCWS484](#), 21 May 2024

20 See the [letter of 6 February 2024](#) from the Chair to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. The proposed scrutiny procedure in the Commons is set out in an annex to this report.

21 For details of the Government's proposed approach, see the [letter of 26 March 2024](#) to the Chair from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero.

### *Net zero and UK aviation and shipping*

43. During the Parliament we have undertaken a substantial inquiry examining the progress in reducing emissions from two sectors of the UK economy considered hard to abate: aviation and shipping. The Government has undertaken to include emissions from international aviation and shipping attributable to the UK in the UK carbon account reckoned for the purposes of the sixth carbon budget (2032–2037): draft legislation to achieve this has not yet been presented to Parliament for approval. We expressed concern over the robustness of some of the projections underpinning the Government's Jet Zero Strategy for reducing emissions from UK domestic and international aviation, and warned that a failure to meet emissions reduction targets from use of lower carbon fuels and operational efficiencies would strengthen the case for measures to manage aviation demand. We pressed the Government for stronger commitments to measures to decarbonise UK shipping so as to meet the more ambitious targets being contemplated at the International Maritime Organization: a refreshed Clean Maritime Plan which sets clear overall and interim decarbonisation targets for the sector is long overdue.

### *The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Climate COPs*

44. The UK is a state party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and is regarded as an influential actor in international climate diplomacy. The UK is required to submit to the UN periodic statements of its nationally-determined contributions to global emissions.

45. The UK and Italy were jointly awarded the Presidency of the 26th Conference of Parties to the Convention (COP26): the UK hosted the Conference, which was held in Glasgow over two weeks in November 2021. Hosting COP had a consequent effect on the UK's own arrangements for net zero delivery. The COP President-designate, Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, was appointed to the Cabinet with responsibility for delivery of the Conference: he also assumed *de facto* responsibility for coordination of the Government's policy on net zero and the production of the Net Zero Strategy issued in October 2021. The Government agreed that he would answer written questions and would be assigned a slot to answer oral questions in the Commons.

46. Several Commons select committees had an interest in scrutinising the UK Presidency of this important international conference and the UK's delivery of a significant global summit. Committee Chairs recognised the challenges inherent in each committee seeking individual scrutiny arrangements with the COP President. The Committees concerned therefore agreed with the COP President an arrangement, proposed by the Chair of this Committee, whereby he and his team would agree to appear before a committee on a set number of occasions in the run-up to and aftermath of COP26. Each committee would use its powers in Standing Orders to invite members of the other interested committees to 'guest' at the session and to ask questions.

47. At COP26 itself the Committee was privileged to arrange an event for delegates showcasing the work undertaken in the UK Parliament and the parliaments of Uganda, Pakistan and Indonesia in scrutinising governmental implementation of climate commitments arising from COP decisions. Chaired by Baroness Parminter, then Chair of the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee, the event featured contributions from our Chair, from Hon. Biyika Lawrence Songa, Chair of the

Parliamentary Committee on Climate Change of the Parliament of Uganda, from Hon. Munaza Hassan, Chair of the Committee on Climate Change of the National Assembly of Pakistan, from Hon. Dr Fadli Zon, Chair of the Interparliamentary Relations Committee of the National Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia and from Darren Jones MP, then Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee. It was followed by a lively question and answer session with delegates.

48. We are pleased to note the increasing trend to engage parliamentarians in the COP process. We are particularly grateful to Rt Hon Graham Stuart MP, who as leader of the UK delegation to COP28 in Dubai, arranged for members of the Environmental Audit Committee and the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee to be accredited to the UK delegation. This provided select committee members with significantly improved access to the Conference and the discussions surrounding the COP negotiations. It also gave Committee members attending the conference the opportunity to launch our report on *The financial sector and the UK's net zero transition*. We are grateful to GLOBE for facilitating this launch event, which brought our findings to a wider international audience. We hope that the precedent set by the leader of the UK Delegation will be honoured and that select committee members will be accredited to future UK COP delegations.

### *The sustainability of Government departments*

49. Throughout this Parliament, we have undertaken work to understand how the Government is tackling its own sustainability ambitions. With the aid of the National Audit Office, we have scrutinised the sustainability of the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Education. These Departments account for significant Government expenditure, a large proportion of publicly owned buildings, and a sizeable proportion of the carbon emissions from the Government's own estate. We encourage our successors to continue scrutiny of the sustainability of Government departments.

### **The role of technology in addressing climate change**

50. A workstream we have pursued over the course of the Parliament concerns the role of technological innovation in providing a means to reduce emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. In the course of this strand of inquiry we have examined the following topics:

- offshore wind;<sup>22</sup>
- hydrogen;<sup>23</sup>
- heat pumps;<sup>24</sup>
- tidal power;<sup>25</sup>

22 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/249/technological-innovations-and-climate-change-offshore-wind/>.

23 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/295/technological-innovations-and-climate-change-hydrogen/>.

24 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/684/technological-innovations-and-climate-change-heat-pumps/>.

25 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/780/technological-innovations-and-climate-change-tidal-power/>.



- community energy;<sup>26</sup>
- the supply chain for battery electric vehicles;<sup>27</sup>
- negative emissions technologies;<sup>28</sup>
- green steel;<sup>29</sup>
- onshore solar power;<sup>30</sup>
- geothermal power,<sup>31</sup> and
- small modular reactors in the transition from fossil fuels.<sup>32</sup>

51. We have sought written and oral evidence on each topic and have written to the relevant Secretary of State with our observations on the contribution each technology can make to the UK's emission reduction goals.

## The transition from fossil fuels

52. We have been conscious in our work of the substantial transformation of sectors of the economy required by the drive to reduce emissions. Our inquiry into *Green jobs* examined the challenges inherent in developing the training and employment opportunities required to support this transition. Our work on *Energy efficiency of existing homes* examined how the country's housing stock in private ownership could be retrofitted to reduce fuel consumption and improve the effectiveness of decarbonised heating methods such as heat pumps.

53. In our February 2021 report on *Greening the post-Covid recovery* we recommended that VAT on green home upgrades should be reduced, so as to incentivise more people to install low-carbon technologies and improve the energy efficiency of existing homes.<sup>33</sup> In the Chancellor of the Exchequer's 2022 Spring Statement the Government announced an expansion of the scope of VAT relief available for energy saving materials, with the intention of ensuring that households pay 0% VAT on any energy saving materials they install.<sup>34</sup>

26 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1047/technological-innovations-and-climate-change-community-energy/>

27 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1223/technological-innovations-and-climate-change-supply-chain-for-battery-electric-vehicles/>

28 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1536/technological-innovations-and-climate-change-negative-emissions-technologies/>

29 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6512/technological-innovations-and-climate-change-green-steel/>

30 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6777/technological-innovations-and-climate-change-geothermal-technologies/>

31 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7037/technological-innovations-and-climate-change-onshore-solar-energy/>

32 Details of this work are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7965/small-modular-reactors-in-the-transition-from-fossil-fuels/>

33 Environmental Audit Committee, [Growing back better: putting nature and net zero at the heart of the economic recovery](#), Third Report of Session 2019–21, HC 347, February 2021, para 226

34 HM Treasury, [Spring Statement 2022](#), CP 653, March 2022, pp. 24–25. The measure was given effect until 31 March 2027 by the [Value Added Tax \(Installation of Energy-Saving Materials\) Order 2022](#) (SI 2022/361).

54. In our work on *Accelerating the transition from fossil fuels and securing energy supplies* we investigated the approach the Government was taking to future energy supplies through the British Energy Security Strategy, and the Government's plans for future extraction of fossil fuels from North Sea fields: we recommended that Ministers set a clear end date for such extraction. Our most recent work on this topic, which culminated in our report on *Enabling sustainable electrification of the economy*, has examined the challenges of preparing the UK's electricity transmission and distribution networks for the substantial increase in supply of energy from renewable installations and the demand for decarbonised energy for use in domestic and industrial applications across all sectors to replace fossil fuels.

## 3 Our work in progress

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55. At the time that Parliament was prorogued, we had three inquiries in progress and were about to launch another. We encourage our successor Committee to consider how work examining these issues, all important to the Government's progress towards environment and sustainability targets, can be taken forward in the new Parliament.

### The UK and the Antarctic environment

56. The Environmental Audit Sub-Committee on Polar Research launched its inquiry in July 2023 and issued a call for evidence.<sup>35</sup> It held five evidence sessions, including with Government Ministers, and undertook a visit to the British Antarctic Survey research station at Rothera, on Adelaide Island to the west of the Antarctic Peninsula. Twenty-seven written submissions were published on the Committee's website.

### The role of natural capital in the green economy

57. We launched our inquiry, which was intended to build on our work on biodiversity and ecosystems undertaken in earlier sessions, in July 2023 and issued a call for evidence.<sup>36</sup> The purpose of the inquiry was to examine the current and potential future role of natural capital in the green economy, and the Government's proposals to increase private investment in measures to support nature recovery. We held five evidence sessions, including with Government Ministers, and published fifty-four written submissions on our website.

58. During our evidence session with Ministers on 20 May 2024 we discussed with Lord Benyon, Minister of State for Climate, Environment and Energy at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the prospects for the forthcoming Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP16) to be held in Cali, Colombia in November 2024.<sup>37</sup> We were encouraged to hear about the work being taken forward jointly by the UK and France to support the International Advisory Panel on Biodiversity Credits in its recommendations to COP16. We encourage the Government to press for an ambitious framework for international standards for biodiversity credits, so as to support a market which drives genuine and significant global improvement in biodiversity levels.

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35 Details of this inquiry are published on the Sub-Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7873/the-uk-and-the-antarctic-environment/>

36 Details of this inquiry are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7882/the-role-of-natural-capital-in-the-green-economy>

37 Oral evidence taken before the Environmental Audit Committee on [The role of natural capital in the green economy](#) HC 280, 20 May 2024, Q364

## Climate change and security

59. We launched our inquiry into Climate change and security March 2024 and issued a call for evidence.<sup>38</sup> The inquiry was intended to examine the interaction of climate change and security issues and the UK Government's approach to anticipating, preventing, and responding to the security threats posed by climate change. We held one evidence session in May 2024 and published thirty-six written submissions on our website.

## Soil health and the soil biome

60. At the time that the Prime Minister announced his intention to call a General Election, we were preparing a call for evidence on the soil microbiome, the role it plays in maintaining healthy soils and the policy actions necessary to ensure that it is protected and enhanced. We had planned this work to complement recent relevant work undertaken by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee.

61. The issues we expected to examine were:

- the current state of knowledge about the role the soil microbiome plays in soil health;
- the role the soil microbiome plays in:
  - protecting plants;
  - decontaminating soils;
  - maintaining soil health;
  - decomposing organic waste, and
  - regulating greenhouse gas emissions;
- how current farming practices complement the role the soil microbiome plays in soil health;
- the human activities which have the greatest detrimental impact on the soil microbiome;
- the impact soil contamination is having on soil health and the soil microbiome, and the contaminant which has the greatest detrimental impact;
- whether current Government policy on soil health adequately recognises the role of the soil microbiome in soil health and food production;
- whether active management of a healthy soil microbiome is sufficiently encouraged by Government through guidance, policy and funding, and
- how Government policy can best support the development of a healthy microbiome in soils in England.

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38 Details of this inquiry are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8339/climate-change-and-security/>.

## Conclusions and recommendations

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### Environmental protection

1. *We recommend that, not later than the end of the first session of the new Parliament, Ministers issue a memorandum reporting on the principal elements of the implementation and operation of the Environment Act 2021, to inform post-legislative scrutiny of that Act during the Parliament. (Paragraph 26)*

### Sustainability and climate change

2. *We recommend that our proposals for Parliamentary scrutiny of the Seventh Carbon Budget, as set out in the Chair's letter to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero of 6 February 2024, be implemented in full. We propose that the successor Committee invite the Secretary of State principally responsible for the Government's delivery plan for the Seventh Carbon Budget to discuss the Government's draft plan at an early date following its presentation to Parliament for scrutiny. (Paragraph 42)*

## Annex 1: National Audit Office studies undertaken for the Committee in the 2019 Parliament

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The National Audit Office undertook a number of examinations of Government performance during the 2019 Parliament at the Committee's request. The reports arising from this work, and the subsequent use of the reports by the Committee, are listed below.

### *Ministry of Defence: Environmental Sustainability Overview*

In May 2020 the NAO published a report which provided an overview of the approach taken by the Ministry of Defence to environmental sustainability.<sup>39</sup>

The Committee took evidence from the Minister for Defence Procurement and Ministry of Defence officials in June 2020.<sup>40</sup>

### *Local government and net zero in England*

In July 2021 the NAO published a report which examined how effectively central government and local authorities in England were collaborating on net zero, in particular seeking to clarify the role of local authorities in contributing to the UK's statutory net zero target; and to ensure local authorities have the right resources and skills for net zero.<sup>41</sup>

The Committee took oral evidence on the findings of the report from local government representatives, campaigners, officials and Ministers in September and October 2021 as part of its *Mapping the path to net zero* workstream.<sup>42</sup>

### *Understanding storm overflows*

In September 2021 the NAO published a briefing paper with insights drawn from its exploratory analysis of data used by the Environment Agency as part of its regulation of storm overflows.<sup>43</sup> The briefing provided contextual data to support the Committee's inquiry into water quality in rivers and set out areas for further consideration.

The findings of the briefing were taken up by the Committee in its subsequent report to the House on *Water quality in rivers* issued in January 2022.<sup>44</sup>

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39 National Audit Office, [Ministry of Defence: Environmental Sustainability Overview](#), 13 May 2020, HC 318

40 Oral evidence taken before the Environmental Audit Committee, [Sustainability of the Ministry of Defence](#), 20 June 2020, HC 533

41 National Audit Office, [Local government and net zero in England](#), 16 July 2021, HC 304

42 Details of the work undertaken in this workstream are published on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1346/mapping-the-path-to-net-zero/>.

43 National Audit Office, [Understanding storm overflows: Exploratory analysis of Environment Agency data](#), 17 September 2021

44 Environmental Audit Committee, [Water quality in rivers](#), Fourth Report of Session 2021–22, HC 74, January 2022

### *Environmental compliance and enforcement*

In May 2022 the NAO published a report with a factual overview of the framework for environmental enforcement and compliance in England.<sup>45</sup> It aimed to provide the Committee with relevant analysis in the context of the significant changes to environmental protection following the UK's exit from the EU and the Environment Act 2021, and concerns that have been raised about the work of the regulators.

In February 2023 the Committee took evidence on the report's findings from the Chief Executives of the Environment Agency and Natural England and the Chair and Chief Executive of the Office for Environmental Protection.<sup>46</sup>

### *Department for Education: sustainability overview*

In June 2023 the NAO published a report examining the approach taken by the Department for Education to environmental sustainability.<sup>47</sup>

The Committee took evidence on the report's findings from the Minister for the School System and School Finance at the Department for Education in September 2023, and followed outstanding issues up in correspondence with the Secretary of State for Education.<sup>48</sup>

### *Implementing statutory biodiversity net gain*

In May 2024 the NAO published a report examining the progress which the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Natural England had made in implementing the statutory biodiversity net gain provisions introduced under the Environment Act 2021, and whether they had done so in a way that maximised benefits and effectively managed risks.<sup>49</sup> It was produced to complement and support the Committee's inquiry into *The role of natural capital in the green economy*.

The report was drawn upon by the Committee in its questioning of Ministers in the final evidence session of that inquiry,<sup>50</sup> and will be available to the Committee in the 2024 Parliament should it wish to undertake work in that area.

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45 National Audit Office, [Environmental compliance and enforcement](#), HC 243, 24 May 2022

46 Details of this work are available on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7238/environmental-compliance-and-enforcement/>.

47 National Audit Office, [Department for Education: sustainability overview](#), HC 1514, 23 June 2023

48 Details of this work are available on the Committee's website at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7925/the-environmental-sustainability-of-the-department-for-education/>.

49 National Audit Office, [Implementing statutory biodiversity net gain](#), HC 729, 17 May 2024

50 Oral evidence taken before the Environmental Audit Committee on [The role of natural capital in the green economy](#), HC 280, 20 May 2024

## Annex 2: Proposed scrutiny procedure for Government proposals for the Seventh Carbon Budget

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The procedure below was proposed to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero by the Chair of the Committee in February 2024. The Secretary of State set out the Government's position on the establishment of the Seventh Carbon Budget in a letter sent in March 2024.

The Committee proposed the following outline arrangements for scrutiny of the Seventh Carbon Budget in the House of Commons, without prejudice to any scrutiny arrangements which might be made in the House of Lords:

- **Early 2025:** the Climate Change Committee (CCC) issues its recommendations on the level of the Seventh Carbon Budget.
  - Parliamentary committees may choose to take evidence from the CCC on its recommendations.
- **Spring 2025:** Ministers announce the proposed level of the Seventh Carbon Budget, and lay before Parliament a draft carbon budget delivery plan for scrutiny and debate.
  - 12 sitting weeks must elapse before Ministers lay a draft Carbon Budget Order for approval.
  - During this period of Parliamentary scrutiny, it is expected that relevant committees of the House may examine the elements of the draft delivery plan which fall within their remits, and may issue reports and/or correspond with Ministers on aspects of the plan.
  - It is envisaged that the Secretary of State principally responsible for the draft delivery plan will agree to appear before the Environmental Audit Committee to discuss the draft plan at an early date during the scrutiny period.
- Once 12 sitting weeks have elapsed, Ministers lay a draft Carbon Budget Order [2025] before the House, together with an impact assessment and such additional explanatory material as may be necessary.
  - When laying the draft Order, Ministers give notice of a motion under Standing Order No. 118(3)(a) (delegated legislation committees) to the effect that the draft Order is not to be referred to a delegated legislation committee.
- The Government arranges for a debate on a motion to approve the draft Order of not less than half a day, on the floor of the House, and provides that Standing Order No. 41A (deferred divisions) shall not apply to any division on the motion.



- Should the draft Order be approved and subsequently enacted, Ministers present a final delivery plan to Parliament pursuant to section 14 of the Climate Change Act 2008.

## Annex 3: Visit of the Polar Research Sub-Committee to the Falkland Islands, Antarctica and Chile, December 2023–January 2024

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From 26 December 2023 to 15 January 2024, members of the Sub-Committee undertook a visit to Antarctica in connection with its inquiry into *The UK and the Antarctic environment*. A note summarising the visit is included here, as the 2024 General Election was called before the Committee concluded its inquiry.

Five members of the Committee (James Gray, Clive Lewis, Jerome Mayhew, Anna McMorris and Matthew Offord) and two staff visited:

- The Falkland Islands
- RRS Sir David Attenborough (SDA)
- Rothera Research Station, British Antarctic Territory
- HMS Protector
- Punta Arenas, Chile

The Committee travelled on board the RRS Sir David Attenborough (SDA), departing from the Falkland Islands to Punta Arenas via Rothera, where the Committee spent four days.

The Committee's principal interlocutors included:

- The Governor of the Falkland Islands
- Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
- Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands
- Falkland Islands Government
- Natural Environment Research Council and British Antarctic Survey colleagues on board the SDA
- Scientists and crew on board the SDA
- The Minister for Americas, Caribbean and the Overseas Territories, the Commissioner of the British Antarctic Territory, and the Head of the Polar Regions Department, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- Staff and scientists at Rothera, including those working on the Antarctic Infrastructure Modernisation Programme
- Personnel and scientists on board HMS Protector

- Instituto Chileno Antártico
- Governor of Magallanes
- Universidad de Magallanes

The Committee's activities included participation in Operation Coldstare (RAF reconnaissance flight over South Georgia); tours of the facilities on the SDA and at Rothera, including those under construction; a transfer to HMS Protector at Rothera; and a visit to the Bosque Antártico ("Antarctic Forest") in Punta Arenas.

The detailed conversations that the Committee held with such a wide range of experts over an extended period greatly enriched our thinking, and played a significant role in shaping our evidence sessions and questioning of witnesses. We are extremely grateful to all of our hosts for their generosity and hospitality, to those who gave up their time to speak with us, and to all those who helped to arrange such an extensive programme in this unique region: the first Select Committee visit of its kind.

# Formal minutes

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**Thursday 23 May 2024**

## **Members present**

Philip Dunne, in the Chair

Cherilyn Mackrory

Jerome Mayhew

Anna McMorrin

Dr Matthew Offord

## **Environmental audit in the 2019 Parliament**

[..]

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (*Environmental audit in the 2019 Parliament*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Paragraphs 1 to 61 read and agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Eighth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

## **Adjournment**

The Committee adjourned.

# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Session 2023–24

Number	Title	Reference
1st	The financial sector and the UK's net zero transition	HC 277
2nd	Environmental change and food security	HC 312
3rd	Net zero and the UK aviation sector	HC 404
4th	The UK's contribution to tackling global deforestation	HC 405
5th	Heat resilience and sustainable cooling	HC 279
6th	Enabling sustainable electrification of the economy	HC 278
7th	Net zero and UK shipping	HC 509
1st Special Report	Seeing the wood for the trees: the contribution of the forestry and timber sectors to biodiversity and net zero goals: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2022–23	HC 406
2nd Special Report	The UK and the Arctic Environment: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2022–23	HC 431
3rd Special Report	The financial sector and the UK's net zero transition: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 550
4th Special Report	Environmental change and food security: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 646
5th Special Report	The UK's contribution to tackling global deforestation: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 669
6th Special Report	Net zero and the UK aviation sector: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 622
7th Special Report	Heat resilience and sustainable cooling: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report	HC 697

## Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Building to net zero: costing carbon in construction	HC 103
2nd	Pre-appointment hearing: Chair of the Environment Agency (Pre-appointment hearing)	HC 546

3rd	Recommendations on the Government's draft environmental principles policy statement	HC 380
4th	Accelerating the transition from fossil fuels and securing energy supplies	HC 109
5th	Seeing the wood for the trees: the contribution of the forestry and timber sectors to biodiversity and net zero goals	HC 637
6th	The UK and the Arctic Environment	HC 1141
1st Special Report	Water quality in rivers: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2021–22	HC 164
2nd Special Report	Greening imports: a UK carbon border approach: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2021–22	HC 371
3rd Special Report	Building to net zero: costing carbon in construction: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 643
4th Special Report	Accelerating the transition from fossil fuels and securing energy supplies: Government and Regulator Response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1221

### Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Biodiversity in the UK: bloom or bust?	HC 136
2nd	The UK's footprint on global biodiversity	HC 674
3rd	Green Jobs	HC 75
4th	Water quality in rivers	HC 74
5th	Greening imports: a UK carbon border approach	HC 737
1st Special Report	Energy efficiency of existing homes: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 135
2nd Special Report	Growing back better: putting nature and net zero at the heart of the economic recovery: Government and Bank of England Responses to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2019–21	HC 327
3rd Special Report	Biodiversity in the UK: bloom or bust?: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 727
4th Special Report	Green Jobs: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1010
5th Special Report	The UK's footprint on global biodiversity: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 1060

**Session 2019–21**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1st	Electronic Waste and the Circular Economy	HC 220
2nd	Pre-appointment hearing for the Chair-Designate of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)	HC 1042
3rd	Growing back better: putting nature and net zero at the heart of the economic recovery	HC 347
4th	Energy Efficiency of Existing Homes	HC 346
1st Special Report	Invasive species: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2019	HC 332
2nd Special Report	Our Planet, Our Health: Government Response to the Committee's Twenty-First Report of Session 2017–19	HC 467
3rd Special Report	Electronic Waste and the Circular Economy: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 1268