

Great British Energy Bill – Briefing for Committee Stage

This briefing is on behalf of environmental coalition [Wildlife and Countryside Link](#) ahead of Committee Stage in the House of Commons of the GB Energy Bill from 8 October 2024.

What's missing from the Bill: A duty for nature alongside climate

Great British Energy, established by the [Great British Energy Bill](#), is an important part of the Government's plans to achieve clean energy by 2030 and net zero by 2050, and the legislation to establish this company is welcome. **In its current form, however, the Bill will not ensure that GB Energy deliver for nature alongside climate.**

The Government was elected on a manifesto which recognised the close links between climate and nature, acknowledging that 'the climate and nature crisis is the greatest long-term global challenge that we face' and that 'the climate crisis has accelerated the nature crisis.' It is important to also recognise that nature has a pivotal role to play in climate efforts: restoring nature has the potential to provide a third of the climate mitigation effort needed to reach net zero.¹

The GB Energy Bill is currently a missed opportunity to ensure that GB Energy delivers for nature alongside climate, straying from the joint nature and climate approach set out in the manifesto the Government was elected on.

We are calling for GB Energy to be given a nature recovery duty, alongside its clean energy, energy efficiency and energy security objectives. A nature recovery duty would place a clear and active requirement on GB Energy to do what it reasonably can within its means to contribute to the achievement of biodiversity targets set under the Environment Act.

Why is a nature recovery duty needed for an energy company?

Currently, public bodies in the UK, including public sector companies, often fail to consider environmental costs and benefits. Despite some good practice, outdated legislation means that Network Rail does not remove the invasive non-native species finding footholds in railway banks in its ownership. Historically, Ofgem has prioritised lowering consumers costs, leading National Grid to site

¹ <https://www.iied.org/cba14-closing-uk-minister-urges-countries-allocate-more-finance-nature-based-solutions-help-tackle>

cables through protected sites on land and at sea, causing declines in site condition.² It is important the GB Energy does not repeat these mistakes.

A more positive precedent can be found in the form of the UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB). This was successfully amended by Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green and crossbench peers during the passage of the UK Infrastructure Bank Act 2023, giving the bank remit to invest in nature-based solutions. This has directly led to UKIB investment in natural capital projects.³

Through a nature recovery duty, GB Energy would have a statutory direction to invest in clean energy projects that meet the highest environmental standards, embed wildlife-friendly design into renewable energy project design, and create more space for nature on development sites.

Done well, renewable energy development can reinforce protections for carbon-rich habitats and deliver more nature-based solutions on land and at sea. If done poorly, clean energy infrastructure can run roughshod over critical natural infrastructure, further diminish nature's contribution to climate mitigation, and set back both nature and climate action.

This issue was raised at Second Reading of the GB Energy Bill on 5 September 2024⁴ and we would be grateful if MPs on the Bill Committee could flag the need for nature to be built into the decision-making processes of GB Energy from the start.

We urge the Government to amend the Bill to give GB Energy a duty to deliver for nature, further smoothing the path to net zero. **We would be grateful if MPs could raise these points at Committee Stage of the GB Energy Bill from 8 October.**

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is the largest nature coalition in England, bringing together 83 organisations to use their joint voice for the protection of the natural world and animals.

We are also calling for a nature recovery duty to be applied to all public bodies,⁵ including Network Rail, The Crown Estate, Ofwat and Ofgem. A Private Members Bill from crossbench peer Lords Krebs, proposing an environmental duty, will be debated in the Lords on 18th October.

For questions or further information please contact:

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² https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/Apply_a_Green_Duty_to_public_bodies.pdf

³ <https://www.endsreport.com/article/1819446/first-natural-capital-loan-paid-uk-infrastructure-bank-stimulate-markets>

⁴ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-09-05/debates/FEB008F4-322C-48DF-8BE6-37B6A5A52F56/GreatBritishEnergyBill#contribution-4D7CED4B-9D6E-43F4-B023-89A30C4F61FC>

⁵ https://wcl.org.uk/docs/Briefing_Environmental_Targets_Bill_Sep_24.pdf

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This briefing is also supported by the following organisations:

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Open Spaces Society

Seal Research Trust

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