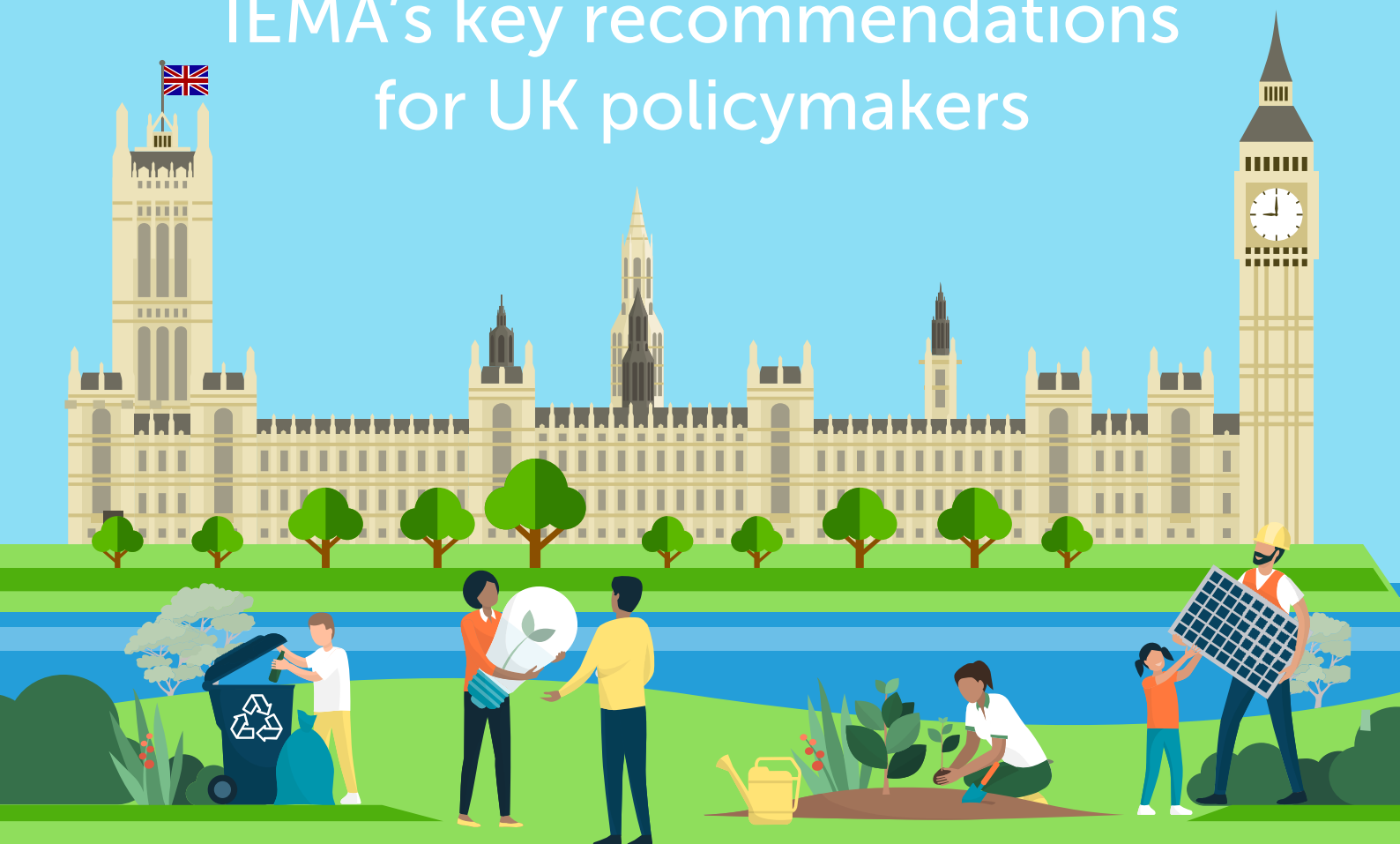


Addressing the climate and biodiversity crises

IEMA's key recommendations
for UK policymakers



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Contents

3	Introduction
4	Green skills and jobs
5	Biodiversity and natural capital
6	Circular economy
7	Climate change and energy
8	Environmental impact assessment
9	Background to IEMA's key recommendations for policymakers
10	Further reading



Introduction

The future prosperity of communities up and down the UK, and globally, is inherently bound to the condition of the natural environment. Our ability to live healthy and fulfilling lives is dependent on the ecosystem services that make this possible and the extent to which our own actions enable the life-preserving qualities of nature to be sustained. That means economic growth and development that respects environmental boundaries.

But importantly, it does not mean that growth and development are no longer economic and policy objectives that can be strived for over the long-term. Growth and the protection of the natural environment are not mutually exclusive. For example, research by the government's independent climate change advisers sets out that from 1990 GDP grew by approximately 40%, whereas during the same period GHG emissions fell by 47%.¹

“The goal of the UK’s environmental and climate policy should be to enable businesses to thrive while enhancing nature for future generations”

The goal of the UK’s environmental and climate policy should be to enable businesses to thrive while enhancing nature for future generations. What’s more is that the public care about this agenda too, with a recent YouGov survey finding that more than two-thirds of the public (67%) are worried about climate change and its effects.²

Through our key policy groups IEMA has developed a series of recommendations for policymakers that we believe can help make the realisation of this goal a reality. Importantly, these recommendations should not be considered in a siloed way. All of these areas relate to one another in a practical sense and so should be considered as a package of joined-up interventions.

This document puts forward recommendations in the following areas:

- **Green skills and jobs**
- **Biodiversity and natural capital**
- **Circular economy**
- **Climate change and energy**
- **Impact assessment**

Environmental and climate policy can only deliver effective outcomes if it is well implemented. Developing the right skills and jobs that can make this happen is therefore also a necessity. To this end, this document starts with putting forward a range of policy recommendations targeted towards ensuring that the UK has the green skills and jobs in place to deliver a cleaner and stronger economy.

This document builds on the proposals set out in *IEMA Core Principles for Environmental Policymaking*.³

¹ Climate Change Committee (2022) Progress in reducing emissions

² YouGov (2022) Most people are worried about climate change – but what are they willing to do about it?

³ IEMA (2022) IEMA Core Principles for Environmental Policymaking

Green skills and jobs

There is a legal requirement for the UK to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050⁴. Across the UK there are also wider environmental targets that each devolved administration must deliver. In England this includes halting the decline in species populations by 2030 and increasing tree and woodland cover to 16.5% of total land area by 2050⁵.

Meeting our climate and environmental targets is an economy-wide challenge. It is not one for sustainability professionals and organisations alone. It is increasingly necessary for all job roles to contribute to delivering greener outcomes.

With YouGov polling data highlighting that 65% of British adults believe they do

not have access to green skills training through their employer,⁶ there is clearly a need to act speedily on policy interventions to create a greener workforce.

IEMA recommends that policymakers, with support from business, should:

1 Establish a permanent cross-government body that takes a strategic approach to delivering green skills and jobs growth in the UK that is tied to our long-term climate and environmental goals.

2 Support the development and utilisation of IEMA's Green Careers Hub to help all workers understand where they fit into the green economy of the future.

3 Raise the profile and understanding of sustainability across Whitehall to ensure the most effective implementation of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Environmental Principles Policy Statement.

“65% of British adults believe they do not have access to green skills training through their employer”



⁴ House of Commons Library (2019) Net zero in the UK

⁵ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2022) New legally binding environment targets set out

⁶ IEMA and Deloitte (2022) A blueprint for a green workforce transformation

Biodiversity and natural capital

There is a biodiversity crisis as well as a climate crisis. Recent research shows **41% of UK species have declined since the 1970s with an increased decline in species in the last 10 years.**⁷

Policy action towards reducing impacts on biodiversity and restoring nature has begun to gather pace. However, there are key actions that are required to make current government policies and requirements more likely to be effective.

IEMA recommends that policymakers, with support from business, should:

1 Take steps to ensure that new requirements for biodiversity net gain in the planning system in England are managed and monitored (and suitably resourced), and that lessons learned are acted upon, to guarantee good outcomes.

2 On Nature Positive, take a lead internationally and mandate business to monitor, assess and disclose risks, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity and create a 'net zero' style momentum.

3 Work towards No Precedence Over Nature, so that the need to protect nature and ecosystem services is not overridden by other public policy choices.



⁷ State of Nature Partnership (2019) State of Nature 2019

Circular economy

The way we use and dispose of materials and products is not sustainable and is a root cause of environmental degradation, climate change and biodiversity decline. The 'throughput economy' (take, make, use, dispose) is no longer viable – instead we need to implement circular practices to achieve greater resource efficiency with the highest sustainable outcomes.

Economic growth is intrinsically linked to greater resource-use and GHG emissions. The way we currently use and dispose of materials and products is not sustainable. By adopting circular strategies that create more value from materials and products throughout their lifecycle, such as repair, refurbishment, renting and sharing, we can enable more resource-secure, resilient and sustainable outcomes.

The need to act urgently is also clear, with research suggesting that **the global economy is currently only 7.2% circular** and that is shrinking.⁸ Importantly, action must be cross-government and cross-economy.

IEMA recommends that policymakers, with support from business, should:

- 1 Focus efforts on achieving absolute decoupling of resource use from GDP incorporating consumption-based measures, not those that are solely production based.
- 2 Establish a resource productivity target (in England) that is underpinned with the principles of green growth to enable the transition to a low-carbon circular economy, the availability of sustainable materials and increasing resource efficiency and the wellbeing of the population.
- 3 Develop a circular renewable strategy to ensure materials and minerals needed for our transition to a net zero economy are reused, remanufactured and recycled.



Climate change and energy

When the UK parliament signed the 2050 net zero target into law in 2019 it was widely considered world leading. Indeed, the UK was the first major economy to establish such a target. However, since then there has been slow progress on delivery, with the government's policy strategy subject to legal challenge and revision.

It is, therefore, of little surprise that in 2022, **much of the energy, some 79.1%, used within the UK still came from fossil fuels.**⁹ The current government has now updated its plans to deliver net zero following the independent review by The Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP, but gaps remain.

IEMA recommends that policymakers, with support from business, should:

1 Mandate consistent principles and standards for climate reporting on transition targets, timelines and plans for all large public and private entities to help ensure that reporting is accurate, transparent and useful for decision-making.

2 Develop a clear investment and deployment roadmap for onshore wind as recommended by the Skidmore Review, and establish a speedier regime for good projects to connect to the grid.

3 Accelerate the rollout of the infrastructure that is required to support the transition to low-emission vehicles, including that which is required for electric vehicles.



⁹ Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (2023) Energy Trends

Environmental impact assessment

Environmental impact assessment (EIA) has been a cornerstone of the planning system in England for decades, enabling local authorities to understand the likely significant effects of projects on the natural environment and therefore helping to bring about effective decision-making.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill that is currently passing through parliament will alter the EIA landscape in England dramatically should it achieve Royal Assent. The legislation sets out a shift away from the current EIA regime to an outcomes-based approach. New Environmental Outcomes Reports will be pursued that today's government suggests will enable its environmental priorities to be better

integrated with plan-making and decision-making for the largest developments.

The proposals are laudable, but IEMA is concerned that the current draft legislation will not necessarily lead to better outcomes for the natural environment and instead a different approach to reforming the current EIA regime should be taken.

IEMA recommends that policymakers, with support from business, should:

- 1** Create a National Environmental Assessment Unit to enhance EIA delivery in England.
- 2** Promote evidence-based practice and continue to mandate the use of competent experts.
- 3** Create more meaningful opportunities to improve public participation in the planning system and with the EIA process.



Background to IEMA's key recommendations for UK policymakers

The recommendations set out in this document have been derived from the research and work undertaken by IEMA's policy and practice steering groups over the last 12-18 months. Insights from the Institute's wider membership have also been captured through roundtable sessions and workshops that have contributed to the development of specific policy reports and representations to relevant government consultations.

Additional insights have been gathered through IEMA's public affairs roundtable series. At these roundtables IEMA members have been able to exchange their views on key areas of environmental policy with members of parliament from across the House of Commons and House of Lords.

Highlights in IEMA's public affairs roundtable series have included:

- Green skills and jobs with Dr Alan Whitehead MP, Shadow Minister (Climate Change and Net Zero)
- Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill with Alex Norris MP, Shadow Minister (Levelling Up, Housing, Communities and Local Government)
- COP15 with The Rt Hon Lord Benyon, Minister of State (Minister for Biosecurity, Marine and Rural Affairs)
- Environmental Improvement Plan with Baroness Young of Old Scone, Member (Environment and Climate Change Committee)
- UK net zero review with The Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP, Chair (Net Zero Review)
- UK net zero delivery with Kerry McCarthy MP, Shadow Minister (Climate Change and Net Zero)
- Circular economy and biodiversity with Alex Sobel MP (Shadow Minister for Nature Recovery and the Domestic Environment)



Further reading

IEMA policy reports and government consultation representations are available at www.iema.net/policy-and-practice/policy-reports

Further information

For more information from IEMA's policy team, please contact:
Ben Goodwin, Head of Policy, IEMA – policy@iema.net

About IEMA

iema.net

We are the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA).

We are the global professional body for over 20,000 individuals and 300 organisations working, studying or interested in the environment and sustainability.

We are the professional organisation at the centre of the sustainability agenda, connecting business and individuals across industries, sectors and borders.

We also help and support public and private sector organisations, governments and regulators to do the right thing when it comes to environment and sustainability related initiatives, challenges and opportunities. We work to influence public policy on environment and sustainability matters. We do this by drawing on the insights and experience of our members to ensure that what happens in practice influences the development of government policy, legislation, regulations and standards.