

Environment and the General Election

As Christians, we are called to care for God's gift of creation, and to love our neighbours near and far. Responding to the climate crisis is an essential part of our responsibility to safeguard God's creation and achieve a just world. Climate change hits hardest the poorest countries and poorest people of the world. Meantime, the widespread destruction of the natural world is a crisis for creation.

A General Election is due in the UK in 2024. With many important topics competing for attention, this guide is to help keep the environment high up on the list of issues which all political parties are concerned about. Climate change and biodiversity loss should form part of election campaigning and policy making in the new parliament.

**Let us love, not
in word or
speech, but in
truth and action.
1 John 3: 18
(NRSV)**

How to use this guide:

The Church of England Environment Working Group has identified five current environmental policy areas. You could choose one or more to bring up with a candidate or party member on the doorstep, to form a question to ask at a hustings event, or to help you write a letter to your candidates. You could also use the information to comment on social media, in discussion with family and friends, or as a starting point for intercessions.

There are also some ideas to help you if you want to take things further and explore more deeply.

And finally, there is some information about how to find out who your MP is, who your candidates will be, and how to get involved with the General Election in other ways.

Five Key Asks

Energy efficient and low carbon homes. Ensure all new build houses are built to net-zero standards and fund the retrofitting of all public sector housing to increase energy efficiency. This means that new homes should be highly energy efficient and run without using fossil fuels, and existing homes become easier and cheaper to keep warm and dry. [Unlocking the benefits of energy efficiency | Citizens Advice](#)

Leave fossil fuels behind and invest in renewable energy. Stop investment and exploration in new sources of fossil fuel extraction. Instead focus on moving to new, renewable technology and improving the capacity and resilience of the National Grid. [The Great Grid Upgrade | Big Issue](#)

Loss and Damage Fund. Keep the UK's promise to support a fund for countries which have already suffered loss of lives, homes and livelihoods because of climate change, including a commitment of financial support from the UK. [Loss and Damage FAQs | Christian Aid](#)

Nature Recovery. Keep the UK's promise to halt and reverse the loss of wildlife and manage 30% of the land and sea for nature by 2030. Known as 30 by 30, the UK joined this global pledge when it was agreed at the biodiversity COP15 in December 2022. The Nature 2030 campaign sets out 5 actions needed to keep this pledge. <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/nature-2030>

Introduce a Climate and Ecology Bill. This is a bill which aims to join up the climate and nature crises, cut emissions, halt the decline of nature and ensure this is all done fairly and with the involvement of the UK public. <https://www.zerohour.uk/>

Taking it further

Candidates want to represent their local constituents. That means that they care about local issues. What are the environmental issues in your local area? Is there an area of wildlife under threat, or a problem of air pollution, or the need for better public transport so that people will leave their cars at home?

“When people say that the Bible and politics don’t mix, I ask them which Bible they are reading.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

The government’s own Committee on Climate Change has lots of suggestions as to what needs to be done to tackle climate change. Find their latest progress report and key messages here:

[2023 Progress Report to Parliament - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](https://theccc.org.uk)

[COP28: Key outcomes and next steps for the UK - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](https://theccc.org.uk)

Transport is an important area where progress on reducing carbon emissions is too slow. A strategy for investment in low carbon travel for people and goods is needed.

Consider starting a deeper conversation about what our economy and policy making should be based on. Are environmental issues built into every policy from the start? Are policies focusing on climate resilience and adaptation or simply unsustainable endless growth. See whether policies are looking towards the [circular economy](#) – a model of consumption where products are reused, repaired and refurbished for as long as possible, and materials are then recycled rather than thrown away.

The environment should be a cross-party issue, where we all recognise the risk to society of not tackling the climate crisis. Climate change leads to negative impacts for nature and for human health, for example through heatwaves leading to higher death rates. Policies focusing on climate resilience and adaptation, such as planning policy to create cool spaces in urban areas, can reduce those impacts.

How to have conversations

Talking to politicians or would-be politicians can be nerve-wracking. Hope for the Future is an organisation which specialises in helping you do just that. Find their training here: [Hope for the Future - Individual Campaigner \(hftf.org.uk\)](https://hftf.org.uk)

Other resources

The Joint Public Issues Team has lots of information about participating in elections as an individual and as a church: <https://jpit.uk/elections>

Information about participation is also available from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland: <https://churcheselection.org.uk/>

Find your MP here: <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/>

Information about candidates for each seat will be available here: <https://whocanivotefor.co.uk/>

For more information, contact Jo Chamberlain
jo.chamberlain@churchofengland.org