

**CONSERVATIVE  
ENVIRONMENT  
NETWORK**

**2023 - 2024**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

# Departing Chair's note

This was a highly consequential twelve months for the Conservative Environment Network (CEN), ending in the general election and the move of the Conservative Party from government into opposition.

With the change in the political cycle, I have also decided to step down as Chair. We established CEN in 2013 to revitalise and amplify the long-standing environmental tradition within the conservative movement. When we set up the organisation, we could never have imagined the successes that we achieved together.

Over the last eleven years, I've been proud to see CEN grow into an influential community of like-minded conservatives who have been pivotal in campaigning for and delivering some significant environmental achievements, such as the Blue Belt of marine reserves around the Overseas Territories and the replacement of EU farm subsidies with the world-first Environmental Land Management scheme. CEN itself has expanded from a small voluntary group into one of the UK's leading centre-right organisations, employing 12 full-time staff members with expertise across a suite of pressing environmental issues. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all of CEN's funders and supporters who have made this all possible.

The CEN team deserve a lot of credit for navigating a challenging year for environmental politics following the last Prime Minister's decision to row back on some key green targets.

Despite these political headwinds, they managed to secure several campaign wins such as the expansion of the Blue Belt of marine protected areas in the UK Overseas Territories and the addition of hedgerow protections. I was also delighted to see the Conservatives commit to increasing the nature-friendly farming budget in their 2024 general election manifesto.

As I step down as Chair and from the Board, I am pleased to be continuing to support CEN's work from the advisory council. I am delighted that one of my co-founders and CEN's long-standing Deputy Chair, Benet Northcote, will succeed me as Chair, bringing a passion for CEN's mission and extensive experience in business, politics, and the environment.

As conservatism undergoes a period of reflection and renewal after the general election debate, the need for strong conservative voices on the environment has never been greater. I look forward to continuing to support CEN in the coming years.

**Ben Goldsmith,**  
**February 2025**





# Incoming Chair's note

I am honoured to have succeeded Ben Goldsmith as the new Chair of CEN. Since CEN's inception over eleven years ago, Ben's support, advice, and passion for restoring nature have been huge assets to the organisation. I want to pay tribute to his many years of leadership and service and say how delighted we are that he will continue to support CEN as a member of our advisory council.

There is much to be done. For the last fourteen years, CEN supported successive Conservative governments in introducing some ground-breaking policies to address nature loss and climate change. However, last year's devastating defeat was a defining moment. While many committed CEN supporters lost their seats in Parliament and local government, fortunately, many environmental champions survived and remain committed members of the CEN caucus. And it is clear from polling, and the need for economic growth, that any return to Government must be predicated on an ambitious, centre-right plan for the environment.

Part of building that programme is the work the team has been doing to hold the new government to account on their environmental commitments since the election.

We've re-established our parliamentary caucus, recruited new Conservative parliamentarians to our caucus, and expanded our network of councillors, supporters, and international legislators.

In the coming months, CEN will release several publications - on topics such as GB Energy and nature restoration - to support conservatives in developing a compelling alternative narrative and policy platform on the environment. We will also step up our international work to create a global umbrella organisation of centre-right environmentalist organisations, alongside supporting the creation of sister organisations in South Korea and Canada.

In my eyes, the importance of CEN's work has never been greater. I am looking forward to the team continuing to advance this critical mission.

**Benet Northcote,**  
**February 2025**



# Contents

<b>4</b>	About CEN
<b>5</b>	The Board
<b>6</b>	Our principles
<b>7</b>	Our highlights
<b>13</b>	Taking root
<b>14</b>	Climate
<b>17</b>	Clean air
<b>19</b>	Nature
<b>23</b>	International
<b>26</b>	Outreach and communications



# 1. ABOUT CEN

*CEN is the independent forum for conservatives in the UK and around the world who support net zero, nature restoration, and resource security. Our network comprises parliamentarians, councillors, grassroots supporters, and international legislators.*

- **We are a broad network**, bringing people together and giving people a shared identity around conservative environmentalism.
- **We convene conservatives to debate** environmental issues in a trusted setting and find common ground.
- **We coordinate environmental action** within the conservative movement and mobilise conservatives to achieve positive environmental policy change.
- **We do not undertake policy research ourselves**, rather we rely on peer-reviewed research to inform our work.
- **We raise awareness of environmental issues** and their electoral importance among conservatives.
- **We promote conservative voices** within the environmental policy debate.
- **We support conservative environmentalists** to become the next generation of political leaders.
- **We bring together conservatives from around the world** to discuss environmental policies and reinforce environmental ambition.

# 2. THE BOARD

## Sam Hall (Executive Director)

Sam joined CEN after having served as a Policy Adviser to Michael Gove when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. He was also the Head of Research at the liberal conservative think tank Bright Blue, leading their work on energy and the environment and authoring several policy reports.

## Rosa Rotko

Rosa is an energy transformation specialist at Mott McDonald, a global management and engineering consultancy. She is also a non-executive Director at the Retail Energy Code Company, where she oversees its net zero work. Prior to this, Rosa worked in the Department for Energy and Climate Change, for the energy company SSE, and the law firm Clifford Chance.

## Linda Richards

Linda was a long-serving parish and local councillor until 2023. Linda has driven forward several environmental projects in her local area, securing bathing water status for the River Wharfe in Wetherby and building the first living wall around a local town centre primary school.

*Ben Goldsmith and Guy Thompson stood down from the Board in 2024 and we thank them both for their guidance and support.*



## Benet Northcote (Chair)

Benet is a Senior Adviser to businesses and NGOs, and a founding partner of the advisory firm Four Thirty Two. He was previously the Director of Corporate Responsibility at the John Lewis Partnership, Deputy Private Secretary to The former Prince of Wales, and Chief Policy Adviser to Greenpeace UK.

## Luke Graham (Treasurer)

Luke served as the MP for Ochil & South Perthshire and was a CEN MP. He sat on the Public Accounts Committee, was PPS for the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and later worked as a Senior Special Advisor in No. 10. With a 13-year career in finance and sustainability, he has worked across start-ups and corporates in the UK, Asia, and the USA, and is a Chartered Management Accountant.

## Jane MacBean

Jane is a councillor in Buckinghamshire and currently chairs its Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee. She is also a member of Bucks' Natural Environment Partnership Board, its Leisure Board, and the Strategic Flood Management Team. She co-created Communi-Tree, an urban re-planting initiative.

## Daisy Powell-Chandler

Daisy is a partner at the strategic consultancy Public First. She runs the company's energy and environment practice, which uses opinion research, economic modelling and policy analysis to change corporate strategy and government policy to reduce the impact of climate change. Before joining Public First, Daisy spent six years at pollster Populus, leading public opinion research projects all over the world.

# 3. OUR PRINCIPLES

We know CEN MPs, peers, councillors, and supporters have differing views on specific environmental issues, but ask them to pledge a commitment to some broad principles which we think underpin conservative environmentalism:

## BRINGING PEOPLE WITH US

We believe that a conservative, science-led approach that empowers individuals, communities, and businesses and goes with the grain of human nature will be most effective at protecting and enhancing the environment.

## SECURING OUR FUTURE

We believe that biodiversity loss, climate change, and wasteful resource use are threats to our national security, and action to incentivise homegrown clean energy, sustainable farming practices, and resource efficiency will make our country safer and more resilient.

## STOPPING CLIMATE CHANGE

We believe that man-made climate change is a threat to our prosperity, and that the UK should end its contribution to climate change by mid-century through affordable, fair, and market-based policies.

## RESTORING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

We believe that we have a responsibility to halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity to ensure that future generations can enjoy rich and abundant nature, while building the homes and producing the food we need.

## SUPPORTING CLEAN GROWTH

We believe that embracing clean technologies, efficiency, and innovation will make the UK more productive and competitive, and that we should capture the opportunities they present to boost exports and drive economic growth, while keeping down costs for consumers.

## REWARDING FARMERS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

We believe that farmers should be given a fair return from the market for sustainable food production and should be rewarded with public and private funding for their role as custodians of our countryside and for protecting and restoring nature.

## TACKLING AIR AND WATER POLLUTION

We believe that pollution is a threat to our natural environment, health, and economy, and that encouraging the uptake of cleaner technologies, cutting waste, and modernising our infrastructure will clean up our air, waterways, and local communities.

## LEADING THE WORLD ON THE ENVIRONMENT

We believe that the UK has both a responsibility and an opportunity to lead the way internationally in protecting the environment, using free trade, finance and diplomacy to promote market-friendly action across the world.



# 4. OUR HIGHLIGHTS

We have five main programmes - climate, clean air, nature, international, and outreach - through which we seek to advance our mission. We have cross-cutting communications and operations teams that support the work of CEN's main programmes.

# 135

**CAUCUS MEMBERS**

*110 MPs and 25 Peers before  
the July 2024 election*

# 511

**COUNCILLORS IN  
OUR NETWORK**

# 1,259

**GRASSROOTS  
SUPPORTERS IN OUR  
NETWORK**

# 369

**INTERNATIONAL  
DECLARATION SIGNATORIES**

*Including three heads of state  
(Italy, Iceland,  
and New Zealand)*

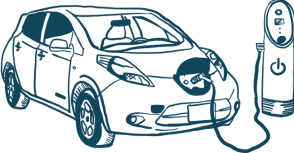
# 18

**MSPs  
IN OUR SCOTTISH  
PARLIAMENTARY GROUP**

# 68

**OP-EDS  
IN OUR WIDEST ARRAY OF  
OUTLETS TO DATE**

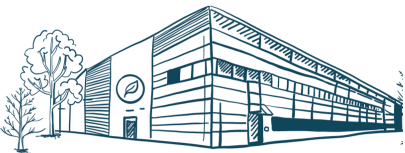
## 1. A ZERO EMISSION MANDATE



Introducing a zero-emission vehicle mandate to increase the proportion of new car and van sales being zero-emission by 2035.

## 2. FULL EXPENSING

Making full expensing permanent to spur business investment in new, lower-emission technologies and factories.

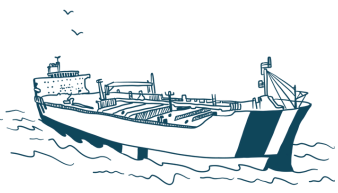


## 3. INVESTMENT ALLOWANCES

Creating an investment allowance in the Electricity Generator Levy for new renewable energy projects.




## 4. A SUPPLY CHAIN ACCELERATOR




Allocating £50 million of funding to create a supply chain accelerator for the UK's offshore wind industry to de-risk the early-stage development of projects.

## 5. A CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM

Introducing a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) by January 2027 to place a price on some of the most emission-intensive industrial goods imported to the UK, thereby creating a level playing field with domestic producers.



## 6. BLUE BELT EXPANSION



Expanding the marine protected area around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands by an additional 166,000km<sup>2</sup> to extend the 'Blue Belt' programme of marine reserves around the Overseas Territories.

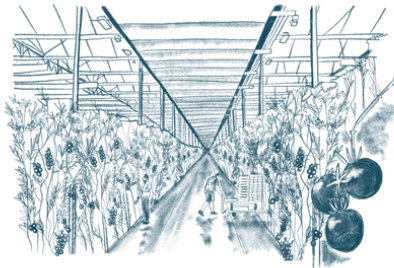
## 7. AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY RELIEF

Extending agricultural property relief scope to include land entered into agri-environment schemes from April 2025.



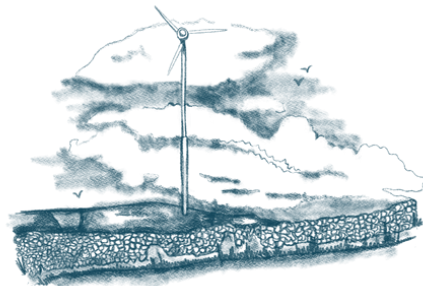
## 8. PLANNING CHANGES

Easing planning restrictions to allow farmers to build new slurry stores and glasshouses more easily.



## 9. PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Expanding permitted development rights for small on-farm wind turbines.



## 10. HEDGEROW PROTECTIONS

Creating new legal protections for hedgerows from inappropriate cutting during bird nesting season (March to August).



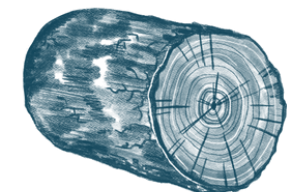
## 11. MANDATORY FOOD LABELLING

Consulting on introducing mandatory labelling for pork, chicken, and eggs to make it easier for consumers to choose their food based on where and how it was produced.



## 10. EMISSIONS TRADING SCHEME

Consulting on including woodland in the UK emission trading scheme.





# EVENTS AND CONVENING



CEN hosted a hustings for Susan Hall, Daniel Korski, and Moz Hussain, who stood for the nomination to be the Conservative candidate for Mayor of London, to discuss their plans for the environment.

**LONDON MAYORAL CANDIDATE HUSTINGS, JULY 2023**



At CPC 2023, we hosted 21 events over three days along with our exhibition stand where we led campaigns on incentivising energy efficiency, protecting and expanding the Blue Belt, and restoring wildflower meadow habitats.

**CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE (CPC), OCTOBER 2023**



CEN took three CEN MPs to Bergen and Oslo to meet with MPs from the Norwegian conservative party, Høyre, and visit several energy transition project sites.

**DELEGATION TO NORWAY, SEPTEMBER 2023**



We worked with our Spanish partner organisation, Oikos, to take two CEN MPs to Madrid and Andalusia to meet with centre-right politicians and to see regenerative agriculture and rewilding sites.

**DELEGATION TO SPAIN, OCTOBER 2023**



We held an environmental leadership summit for 40 prospective parliamentary candidates and were joined by a range of policy experts to discuss the upcoming opportunities for new MPs on the environment.

**CANDIDATES' SUMMIT, NOVEMBER 2023**



We hosted a dinner in Edinburgh for 11 Conservative MSPs from our Scottish Parliamentary Group to discuss the circular economy.

**DINNER WITH MSPS'**



CEN worked with the Labour Climate and Environment Forum (LCEF), Energy Climate and Intelligence Unit (ECIU), and the Parliamentary Renewable & Sustainable Energy Group (PRASEG) to take a cross-party delegation of nine MPs, including three Conservative MPs, to COP28 in Dubai.

**DELEGATION TO COP28, NOVEMBER 2023**



We attended these two annual CCA events. At the development weekend in November, we hosted a 'campaigning on the environment' training session, and a drop-in stall at the CCA conference in February.

**CONSERVATIVE COUNCILLORS' ASSOCIATION (CCA) EVENTS, NOVEMBER 2023 & FEBRUARY 2024**





In partnership with the energy firm RWE, CEN hosted a panel to discuss the role of offshore energy in Wales' energy mix. We also hosted a stall in the exhibition hall to meet new grassroots supporters.

**WELSH CONSERVATIVE CONFERENCE, FEBRUARY 2024**



CEN hosted an away day for its most active grassroots supporters to talk about the Conservatives' record in government, provide communications advice, and help with myth-busting on common misconceptions about the environment.

**AMBASSADOR AWAY DAY, APRIL 2024**



CEN had an exhibition stand to meet with existing and new members of our Scottish parliamentary group, along with MPs, councillors, and grassroots supporters to discuss the environmental issues affecting Scotland.

**SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVE CONFERENCE, MARCH 2024**



We hosted our annual lecture in memory of our former director, with a keynote speech from the Rt Hon Lord Hague of Richmond.

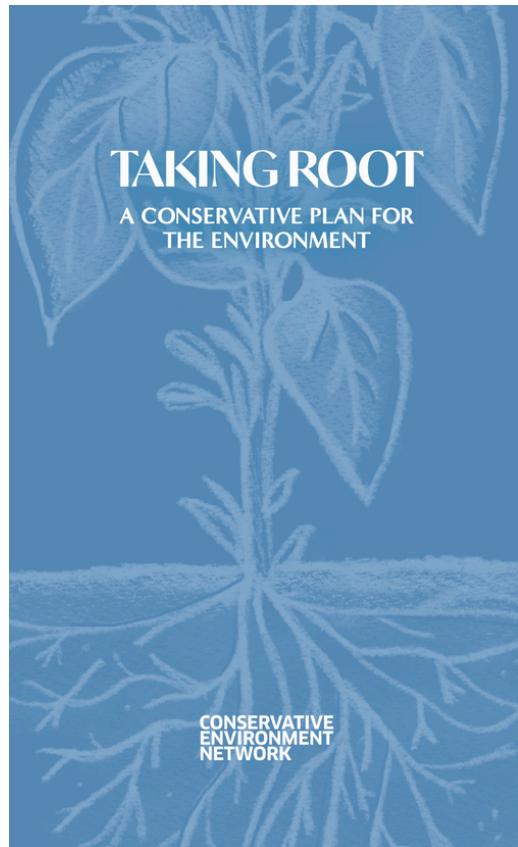
**SAM BARKER MEMORIAL LECTURE, MAY 2024**



# 5. TAKING ROOT

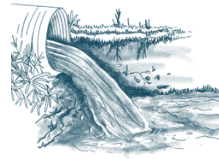
Ahead of the general election, CEN produced a 10-point plan urging the Conservative Party to make ambitious new commitments to environmental stewardship in its manifesto and celebrate its green record.

Our 10-point plan urged the Conservatives to lay claim to their environmental record, adopt bold environmental policies, and not cede this policy area to the left. Proposals in the plan included introducing tax cuts for energy efficiency and green supply chain investment, expanding rooftop solar, boosting railway competition, reforming water regulations, creating local nature recovery zones, protecting the marine environment, planting more trees, and maintaining the nature-friendly farming budget in real terms.



We saw the party adopt three of our suggested policies including:

## 1. OVERHAULING THE REGULATION OF THE WATER SECTOR



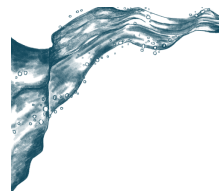
Our current water regulation is overly prescriptive and output-based, with companies required to develop a vast array of different plans and strategies for the water environment. The Conservatives committed to moving to a more outcome-based approach to water regulation.

## 2. INCREASING THE UK FARMING BUDGET BY £1 BILLION IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT AND LINKING IT TO INFLATION



The farming budget had been frozen in cash terms during the previous parliament, meaning high inflation levels eroded its value. The Conservatives committed to increasing the budget by £1 billion in the next parliament.

## 3. CONSULTING WITH THE UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES ON EXPANDING THE BLUE BELT



The Blue Belt is the world's largest network of marine protected areas (MPAs). The Conservatives committed to build on this success by consulting UKOT governments about potentially extending the Blue Belt of MPAs.

# 6. CLIMATE

Our climate programme engages conservatives to develop and champion market-led solutions to reach net zero by 2050. We believe that man-made climate change threatens our prosperity and security. In the age of net zero, the UK must lead efforts to decarbonise to remain economically competitive, win investment, build new industries, and create skilled jobs.

Through our network of parliamentarians, councillors, and supporters we promote fair, affordable, and market-based solutions to improve the UK's energy efficiency, build more cheap and clean renewable energy, decarbonise our transport, and support green finance. The policy areas we worked on between July 2023 and June 2024 include:

## 1 ELECTRIC VEHICLES

After the Uxbridge by-election in July 2023, we urged CEN MPs to back the 2030 new petrol and diesel car phase-out. Several CEN MPs made supportive comments publicly in the House of Commons chamber and others made representations in private to whips and ministers. Following this, around 15 CEN MPs met the then Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, to discuss their support for climate policies, including an ambitious EV transition. Although the petrol and diesel phase-out was delayed to 2035, the government did pass the zero-emission vehicle mandate which broadly maintains the trajectory for EV adoption. And ahead of the 2023 Autumn Statement, we coordinated a letter signed by 24 MPs calling for a VAT cut on public EV chargers.



## 2 RENEWABLE ENERGY

We continued to campaign for more renewables in our energy mix, pushing for a higher strike price cap after the fifth Contracts for Difference auction failed to secure any offshore wind projects. We also coordinated several media interventions from CEN MPs to call for full expensing for capital projects, investment allowances in the electricity generators levy, and more offshore wind supply chain support – all of which were ultimately successful - in the 2023 Autumn Statement. We placed several MP quotes and engaged with other centre-right think tanks to build up support for mandatory community benefits for energy infrastructure.

## 3 CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM

Working closely with CEN MP Jerome Mayhew, we coordinated a news story and an op-ed from a group of CEN MPs calling for the introduction of a carbon border adjustment mechanism, which the Conservative government committed to introducing by 2027.



## 4 THE NORTH SEA TRANSITION

We supported CEN MPs to propose amendments to the Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill to include stricter emissions targets and marine conservation safeguards. In October 2023 also published an essay collection featuring ten centre-right politicians from different countries, exploring market-led approaches to the clean energy transition.





### **THE 2030 BAN ON FOSSIL FUEL CAR SALES IS VITAL TO NURTURE A WORLD-CLASS BRITISH ELECTRIC CAR INDUSTRY**

*BY CEN MP SAQIB BHATTI (AUGUST 2023)*



### **CONSERVATIVES MUST ACCEPT THAT THE AGE OF FOSSIL FUEL DOMINANCE IS OVER**

*BY THEN CEN MP VIRGINIA CROSBIE (OCTOBER 2023)*



### **HOW TO GROW THE GREEN ECONOMY WITHOUT INCREASING BORROWING OR TAXES**

*BY CEN MP MARK GARNIER (APRIL 2024)*

The Conservatives built up some significant achievements on climate between 2010 and 2024, including enshrining net zero, increasing the proportion of renewables in our energy mix, and overseeing 1.3 million EVs registered on UK roads. CEN campaigning was instrumental in many of these successes. However, there remains an acute risk that in opposing the new government's energy policies, the Conservatives could continue to backtrack on their record and weaken their policies.

Over the coming year, our climate programme will be developing an alternative climate policy platform that resonates with voters' priorities and harnesses market mechanisms to reduce costs. We have plans to put forward a policy options paper to counter Labour's GB Energy and National Wealth Fund with a market-led plan to advance the energy transition. Additionally, we will be supporting our network of parliamentarians, councillors, and grassroots supporters to call for mandatory benefits for communities hosting clean energy infrastructure, tax cuts to encourage energy efficiency upgrades, increased competition on the railways to drive up standards and reduce fares, and deliver planning reforms to expedite rolling out clean technologies.

# 7. CLEAN AIR

Our clean air programme primarily works with conservatives in local government to champion a distinctly centre-right vision for tackling air pollution. While significant improvements to our air quality have been made since 2010, air pollution remains the largest environmental threat to human health. Poor air quality contributes to a poorer quality of life, more acute health conditions, and thousands of premature deaths every year.

Through our network of councillors, parliamentarians, and mayors we are working to promote a centre-right approach to encouraging more walking and cycling, better public transport, and accelerating the EV transition. Between July 2023 and June 2024, we worked on:

## 1 EXPANDING OUR NETWORKS IN OUR THREE TARGET REGIONS

We increased our presence and engagement in the West Midlands, South East, and Greater Manchester through hosting online and in-person events. We hosted an online roundtable with the then Leigh MP, James Grundy, and local councillors to discuss pragmatic alternatives to the Greater Manchester charging clean air zone which was under review, a public webinar with former MP Laura Sandys and the then West Midlands mayor, Andy Street, to discuss active travel and local authority environment strategies, and a reception in Winchester with then CEN MPs Steve Brine and Flick Drummond to meet and discuss the environment with councillors in the area.

## 2 DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY-FOCUSED CLEAN AIR NARRATIVE

We have worked to develop and promote a clean air narrative that focuses on revitalising town centres, enhancing public transport links, and creating quieter and lower traffic communities, as these messages tend to be more appealing to those on the centre-right. We deployed this narrative in our briefings and parliamentary roundtables and featured it in our pre-election ten-point plan.

## 3 PRODUCING A CASE STUDY MAP AND BRIEFINGS

We regularly updated our case study map to showcase best practices on clean air from Conservative-led councils. Alongside our regular council newsletters, briefings, and webinars, we have shown that there is a distinctively conservative case for and record of action on air pollution.

4

## PUBLISHING A METRO MAYOR MANIFESTO SUBMISSION

Our policy bank submission to metro mayoral candidates included ideas on clean air and transport decarbonisation. The policies were inspired by the community-based narratives that we have been deploying on clean air and were received by several candidates. We also hosted a Conservative London mayoral candidate hustings and a webinar with Andy Street, and regularly engaged with Ben Houchen's team.

### CONSERVATIVES MUST LEARN THE RIGHT LESSONS FROM UXBRIDGE – AND OPPOSE LABOUR'S CHARGE THAT WE'RE ANTI-ENVIRONMENT

BY CEN MP DAVID SIMMONDS  
(JULY 2023)

### AFTER ULEZ CONSERVATIVES SHOULDN'T BE AFRAID TO TACKLE AIR POLLUTION

BY CEN COUNCILLOR JED DWIGHT  
(DECEMBER 2023)



### CONSERVATIVE POLICIES ARE THE MOST PRACTICAL FOR REDUCING AIR POLLUTION

BY CEN COUNCILLOR EMMA  
MARSHALL (MARCH 2024)

## FUTURE PLANS

The Conservatives have a positive story to tell on clean air: from the 1956 and 1993 Clean Air Acts to creating an ambitious plan and funding for active travel. However, after the Uxbridge by-election in July 2023, more people within the Conservative Party have expressed doubts about the value of tackling air pollution.

We want to develop and socialise our market-based policy ideas to clean up the air. We plan to campaign to promote the benefits of privately-run rail and bus networks to encourage lower fares, less pollution, and better passenger experiences. We hope to release a publication with prominent conservatives on how to green up our towns and cities, along with polling and updated campaigning on the environment toolkit to demonstrate the electoral benefits of setting bold conservative clean air plans.



# 8. NATURE

Our nature programme works with conservatives to champion market-based solutions to restore our natural environment. We believe we have a responsibility to halt the decline in biodiversity and that we can do this by producing food more sustainably, using our resources more efficiently, cleaning up our waterways, and properly protecting nature on land and at sea.

Working with our network of parliamentarians, councillors, and supporters we are working to convene conservatives around policies to tackle water pollution, use our post-Brexit freedoms to farm in a more nature-friendly way, create a more resource-efficient economy, and restore nature to our terrestrial and marine environments. Between July 2023 and June 2024, we worked on:

## 1 CAMPAIGNING TO PROTECT GREAT BRITISH PENGUINS

We successfully campaigned to secure an additional 166,000km<sup>2</sup> of full protection to the marine protected area (MPA) around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. We organised meetings with five CEN parliamentarians, and secured a Westminster Hall debate, along with a series of media interventions including a letter to the editor of The Times signed by 23 MPs and peers. Using the penguin as the flagship species, we partnered with Conservative Friends of the Ocean at the Conservative Party Conference to gather 176 signatures for a letter to



the Prime Minister to support the campaign. We also engaged privately with the Foreign Office, Department for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, relevant special advisors, and Downing Street officials.



## **2 PUBLISHING OUR 'PLOUGHING AHEAD' MANIFESTO**

We published our farming manifesto, supported by 27 parliamentarians in February. The last government adopted four of our 17 policy recommendations, including an inheritance tax break for farmers engaged in agri-environment schemes and less red tape for building horticultural glass houses.

## **3 PUBLISHING OUR 'BRANCHING OUT' MANIFESTO ON TREES, FORESTS, AND WOODLANDS**

Published in May, this manifesto was supported by 34 parliamentarians, including previously less engaged caucus members, such as Sir Desmond Swayne, and contained 18 policy recommendations. Unfortunately, the early timing of the general election meant we only secured one policy win: the government ran a consultation on the inclusion of trees within the UK emissions trading scheme. William Hague also championed the manifesto during his speech at our annual Sam Barker Memorial Lecture.



## **4 LEADING A CAMPAIGN TO BAN THE SALE OF HORTICULTURAL PEAT**

We worked with former Environment Secretary and then CEN MP Theresa Villiers on a ten-minute rule bill to ban horticultural peat sales by 2024. Ten Conservative MPs backed the bill, and a CEN councillor introduced a motion in Chester Council to halt the use of horticultural peat in the council's procurement. We also published a councillor briefing and secured media coverage with op-eds in Conservative Home, the Daily Telegraph, and others.

**5 SECURING A SET OF AMBITIOUS POLICIES WITHIN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO**

Through our ‘Taking Root’ 10-point plan, we secured the following manifesto commitments on nature: cutting red tape for tree planting; Blue Belt expansion; Global Oceans Treaty ratification; an increase to the farming budget; planning reforms for slurry stores; a recommitment to regulating forest risk commodities; and an ambitious commitment to change the regulatory environment for water to a more catchment-based and outcome-focused approach.

**6 CAMPAIGNING FOR GREATER RESOURCE SECURITY WITH CEN PARLIAMENTARIANS AND COUNCILLORS**

In October, we supported then CEN MP Caroline Ansell with a Westminster Hall debate on the circular economy. We have also continued our work on biomass, providing media opportunities for our caucus members and encouraging MPs to sign then CEN MP Pauline Latham’s amendment to the Energy Bill.

PoliticsHome

**THE GOVERNMENT MUST DO MORE TO PROTECT GREAT BRITISH PENGUINS**

*BY THEN CEN MP SIR ROBERT BUCKLAND (NOVEMBER 2023)*

The Telegraph

**OUR PEATLANDS ARE PRECIOUS AND WE NEED TO PROTECT THEM**

*BY FORMER ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY THÉRÈSE COFFEY (APRIL 2024)*

Daily Mail

**A LACK OF ACCURATE AND DETAILED DATA IS BEING ABUSED TOO OFTEN TO SCARE PEOPLE OUT OF THE WATER**

*BY THEN CEN MP SELAINE SAXBY (MAY 2024)*

## FUTURE PLANS

The Conservatives enacted several key pieces of legislation to conserve our natural environment including setting a world-leading legal target to halt the decline in nature by 2030. This parliament will be a make it or break it moment for this target. However, the new government has yet to detail how it plans to build upon this impressive legacy, especially on nature restoration, water, farming, and waste.

In the coming months, we will support our network of MPs, councillors, and grassroots supporters to focus on policy areas overlooked by the new government, like marine conservation, or at risk of cuts, such as sustainable farming.

We are already underway with this work, having hosted our Cleaner Communities Conference in October 2024 for members of our councillor network to hear from the Shadow Local Government Minister and industry leaders about how they can become more resource-efficient.



We have exciting plans to publish a document setting out the conservative case for nature restoration in the UK. We are currently seeking funding to enable us to work on topics such as species reintroductions, nature-friendly development, the circular economy, and alternative proteins.

# 9. INTERNATIONAL

Our international programme deploys CEN's experience and expertise in navigating the centre-right politics of climate change in the UK to build an international coalition of conservative legislators who support ambitious action on the environment. We share resources and advice on policy and narratives, host events like delegations, webinars, and roundtables with our international partners, and have built an extensive network of centre-right actors on climate change. Between July 2023 and June 2024, our work focused on:

## 1 HOSTING A DELEGATION TO NORWAY

CEN has been leading efforts to create an independent umbrella organisation for centre-right climate organisations across the world. We spent early 2024 gauging demand amongst our European partner organisations and drafting a structure and activities for the umbrella organisation.

## 2 HOSTING A DELEGATION TO SPAIN

In September 2023, we took three CEN MPs to Norway to meet with conservative politicians and visit a carbon capture and storage (CCS) project. The trip gave the MPs first-hand experience of Norway's energy transition and helped to strengthen our relationship with key politicians from the centre-right Høyre party.

## 3 CO-ORGANISING A CLIMATE AND SECURITY CONFERENCE IN WARSAW

In November 2023, we co-hosted a climate and security conference in Warsaw with Our Common Home, Polska z Natury, and the Jagiellonian Club. We ran a series of panels that discussed energy security issues with centre-right figures from central and eastern Europe, including the Polish COP20 President and a former Prime Minister of Estonia.



*CEN team members at our climate and security conference in Warsaw, November 2023*



#### 4 DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR AN UMBRELLA ORGANISATION

CEN has been leading efforts to create an independent umbrella organisation for centre-right climate organisations across the world. We spent early 2024 gauging demand amongst our European partner organisations and drafting a structure and activities for the umbrella organisation.

#### 5 HOSTING A CROSS-PARTY DELEGATION TO COP28

CEN took a cross-party delegation of nine MPs with LCEF, ECIU, and PRASEG to COP28 in Dubai. CEN organised meetings for the Conservative MPs on the delegation with their counterparts in Germany, Denmark, Norway, South Africa, the US, and Australia. CEN MPs also attended a lunch to discuss conservative COP priorities and met with climate activists, previous COP presidents, and businesses involved in the energy transition.



#### 6 BUILDING CENTRE-RIGHT CLIMATE EXPERTISE AND CAPACITY IN SOUTH KOREA AND CANADA:

Since the South Korean presidential adviser on climate change, Dr. Kim Sang-Hyup visited the UK in April 2023, we have been working to create a new centre-right environment group in Korea. We are also supporting the creation of a similar organisation in Canada.

## IN THE NEWS

PoliticsHome

### **COP28 SHOULD NOT "BULLY" DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO NET ZERO**

*BY THEN CEN MP KWASI  
KWARTENG (NOVEMBER 2023)*

PoliticsHome

### **COP28 AGREEMENT UNDERLINES GREEN GLOBAL AMBITION IS GOOD FOR THE UK**

*BY THEN CEN MP GREG CLARK  
(DECEMBER 2023)*

PoliticsHome

### **THE UK SHOULD LEAD THE COMMONWEALTH INTO THE NEW GREEN REVOLUTION**

*BY CEN DEPUTY DIRECTOR JOHN  
FLESHER (MARCH 2024)*



## FUTURE PLANS

We want to continue to deepen the coalition of centre-right politicians, parties, and organisations across the world who support ambitious action to halt climate change. We aim to bring together our international partners into a more coordinated international umbrella organisation to link conservative environmentalists worldwide. As part of this, we also plan to continue supporting other countries to develop centre-right climate organisations, as we have been in South Korea and Canada - our medium-term priorities include Brazil, Japan, and Chile.

# 10. OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS

CEN's outreach programme is forming a community of centre-right environmentalists, activists, students, parliamentary researchers, think tankers, businesses, and academics. We work to engage and inform our supporters, mobilise them to champion conservative environmentalism, and provide a space to debate environmental topics.

Our communications function promotes conservative environmentalist ideas and achievements through the media. CEN provides its supporters with assistance in writing op-eds, providing comments, and appearing on broadcast media. We work with media outlets across the political spectrum to encourage both the government and the Conservative Party to adopt stronger, more ambitious, market-based solutions to our environmental challenges. Our key achievements between July 2023 and July 2024 include:



*CEN ambassadors at our away day, April 2024*

## 1 GROWING OUR SUPPORTER NETWORK

Our grassroots supporter network now has over 1,000 members. At the 2023 Conservative Party Conference in Manchester, we had a stand to promote our events, recruit new supporters, and highlight our campaigns on marine protected areas, wildflowers, and energy efficiency upgrades.

## 2 HOSTING SUPPORTER WEBINARS

We have hosted webinars on topics such as COP28, nuclear, net zero jobs, sustainable homes, and voter priorities for the general election. These events have brought together our supporters, councillors, and new sign-ups to our network.

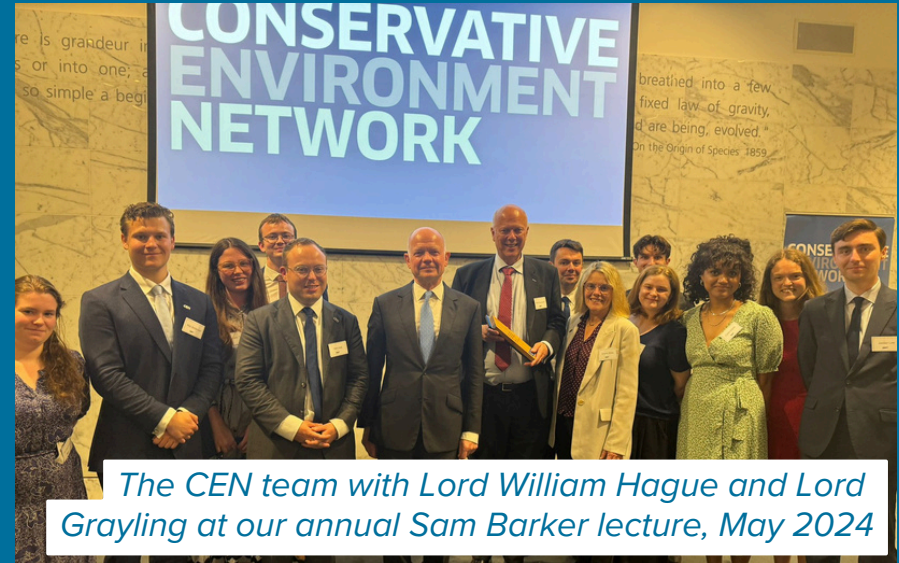


### 3 INCREASING OUR MEDIA PRESENCE

In 2023, CEN was featured in the media over 303 times. Our policy to scrap inheritance tax on farmland entered into the agri-environment schemes in our 'Ploughing Ahead' manifesto gained support from the Telegraph and other policies were covered by the Times, Daily Mail, Daily Express, Politico, GB News, and the Evening Standard. Our campaign to ban the sale of horticultural peat was covered by the Sunday Telegraph, the Times, Daily Express, Daily Mail, Conservative Home, and Politico. We have also grown our reach within the right-wing press, landing 18 stories in the Daily Mail and growing our presence on GB News.

### 4 LANDING OVER 68 OPEDS

We landed 68 op-eds in the last year, up from 61 the previous year, including 31 ghost-written pieces for 26 Conservative MPs. Our pieces were in media outlets across the political landscape including the Telegraph, Daily Mail, Guardian, Daily Express, Conservative Home, and Business Green. We also built up the media profile of CEN team members with pieces landed in the Guardian, Express, and New Statesman.



### 5 RELAUNCHING OUR AMBASSADORS NETWORK

We relaunched our ambassadors network in November 2023, which now has over 30 members, including a young ambassador network for under 26s. We host regular catch-ups with our ambassador network for under 26s. We host regular catch-ups with our ambassadors to keep them involved in our work. We held an ambassador away day in April 2024, where we were joined by then CEN MP Felicity Buchan, Climate Outreach to discuss climate communications, and the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit to talk about myth-busting.

## 6 ENGAGING WITH PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES

In November 2023 we held an environmental leadership summit for 40 prospective parliamentary candidates. It featured talks from energy specialist, Michael Lieberich; Onward's Head of Energy and Environment, Ned Hammond; and Martin Lines of the Nature Friendly Farming Network. We subsequently organised a visit to Martin Lines's farm and shared public briefings with candidates during the general election campaign.

## 8 HOSTING ANOTHER CEN ACADEMY

In August 2023, we hosted our second CEN Academy for 24 students. It featured a visit to RSPB Otmoor, and talks from the then Secretary of State for the Environment Thérèse Coffey and the then Attorney General, Victoria Prentis.

## 7 CREATING NEXT GEN CEN

With the help of our young ambassadors, we've launched a specific offering to young people. We've created a webpage dedicated to Next Gen CEN and sent a tailored mailing to this group.

## 8 PUBLISHING A NEW COUNCILLOR MAGAZINE

We published an autumn and winter magazine. Each edition was sent to 1000 councillors with a further 500 printed to take to conference events. This has proven very popular, sharing case studies of successful conservative environmental policies which councillors can replicate across the country.



*Then CEN MPs Katherine Fletcher and Jason McCartney speaking at our 'Young Professionals Networking drinks', April 2024*

# FUTURE PLANS

As the Conservative Party looks to grow from the grassroots in opposition, our work to broaden and mobilise our base of supporters and councillors and presence in the media will be ever more crucial. We will look to develop more campaigns to demonstrate the support for environmental policies amongst conservative grassroots and influential conservatives, as the new leader charts a route back to power.

With the Conservatives' parliamentary presence greatly diminished, debates will be led increasingly by opinion formers, pressure groups, commentators, and politicians outside Westminster. Our grassroots programme will look to influence the debate around the future of conservatism and shape the new party leader's thinking.

This will see us change our interaction with the media and move towards a long-term strategic approach to a select number of campaigns. We will attempt to shape a conservative narrative around

these campaigns to increase environmental interest among the centre-right and pressure the government into taking action. We hope this will create a positive debate from the centre-right and put constructive pressure on the Labour government.



*A panel on access to nature at CPC23, October 2023*



**CONSERVATIVE  
ENVIRONMENT  
NETWORK**