

General Election 2017: Manifestos Briefing

As an independent learned society and charity, the BES is completely politically neutral, and does not endorse any political party or candidate, or their policies. Below, we have highlighted the main policy pledges from the seven political parties involved in the recent televised debate, across six policy areas of interest to us and our members. The summaries below are not an endorsement of any political party or their policies, and should not be assumed to be fully comprehensive. Where a party is not listed, indicates that this policy area was not covered in their UK manifesto.

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1. Science policy

The **Conservatives** state that “our long term prosperity depends upon science, technology and innovation”. They would aim to meet the OECD average of 2.4% of GDP investment in research and development within ten years, with a longer term goal of 3%. They would “increase the number of scientists working in the UK”. The manifesto states that they would “enable leading scientists from around the world to come here” and continue to “collaborate in science and innovation” with the European Union.

Labour commit to meeting the OECD target of 3% of GDP investment in research and development by 2030. They would seek to stay a part of Horizon 2020 and its successor funding programmes, and “welcome research staff to the UK”.

The **Liberal Democrats** would oppose any reduction in investment in UK universities as a result of Brexit, and would protect the science budget, with a long term goal of doubling research and development spend across the economy. They would “recognise the value of international staff in universities and promote international collaboration”, whilst seeking to retain access to Horizon 2020 and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions.

The **Scottish National Party** call for a Scottish representative to be a standing member on the board of the new research funding body, UK Research and Innovation. They will seek clarity from the UK government on

what will replace European research funding. Specifically, they will “defend the interests of environmental scientists from across the EU who contribute so much to the success of Scotland’s research institutes.”

2. Brexit and environmental legislation

The **Conservatives** state that their proposed “Great Repeal Bill”, which will convert EU law into UK law, will ensure that the protections given to the environment by EU law will “continue to be available in UK law at the point at which we leave the EU”. The Bill will also create the necessary powers to “correct the laws that do not operate appropriately once we have left the EU”.

The **Green Party** would ensure that “vital rights for people and the environment” are safeguarded in the Brexit process, and put environmental protection at the heart of any future trade deals. They would introduce an Environmental Protection Act to “safeguard and restore our environment”, including biodiversity, sustainable farming and animal protection. They would introduce a new environmental regulator and court to monitor and enforce environmental law, including statutory requirements for updates in Parliament on the state of nature.

Labour would introduce an “EU Rights and Protections Bill”, which would ensure that there are no detrimental changes to environmental protections as a result of Brexit. They will ensure that “all EU derived laws that are of benefit”, including environmental protections, are “fully protected without qualifications, limitations or sunset clauses”. They would consult on establishing “an environmental tribunal with simplified procedures to hear challenges to unlawful government decisions”.

The **Liberal Democrats** would ensure that “everything is done” to maintain EU environmental standards in UK law, including “the closest possible co-operation on climate and energy policy”. They would pass five green laws – a Green Transport Act, a Zero-Carbon Britain Act, a Nature Act, a Green Buildings Act and a Zero-Waste Act, that will incorporate existing EU environmental protections and establish a framework for continual improvement.

The **Scottish National Party** will aim to ensure that the environmental protections currently safeguarded by EU membership are not diminished after the UK leaves. They will seek the devolution of powers that will be repatriated from Brussels to the UK that currently sit within the competences of the Scottish Parliament, including environmental protection.

The **UK Independence Party** would review all EU environmental legislation, keeping “those which have enhanced our environment”, and amending or repealing legislation “which can be shown to have had a detrimental effect”. They would introduce a new Environmental Protection Act, “prioritising policies to protect our precious countryside for future generations”. They would repeal the Water Framework Directive.

3. The natural environment

The **Conservatives’** manifesto reiterates their 2015 pledge to be the “first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it”. They would introduce a “comprehensive 25 Year Environment Plan” to chart how we will improve our environment after Brexit and take control of our

environmental legislation. They would continue their work to conserve the marine environment off the coast of the UK. Forests would be kept in public ownership, with stronger protections for ancient woodland, and an additional 1 million trees planted in urban areas. They commit to improving natural flood management, including the quality of water courses to “protect against soil erosion and damage to vulnerable habitats and communities.” Internationally, the Conservatives would continue to lead action on the “degradation of habitat and loss of species”. They would “champion greater conservation co-operation within international bodies, protecting rare species, the polar regions and international waters”. They would with the UK Overseas Territories to create a “Blue Belt” of marine protections, establishing the world’s largest marine sanctuaries.

The **Green Party** would “set an inspiring vision for the natural world” on land and at sea “with thriving species, healthy habitats, and ensuring the environment is top of the political agenda”. They would invest in natural flood management and ensure “equality of access to nature and green spaces”. The Green Belt, National Parks, SSSIs and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty would be afforded strong protection, and a “wider, more effective network of marine protected areas” would be created, including “fully protected no take zones”. They would introduce 25 year targets for biodiversity, water and air quality, and promote “a network of new interlinking local ecological spaces”.

Labour pledge to “defend and extend existing environmental protections”. They would safeguard species and habitats in the “blue belts” of seas around the UK. Forests will be kept in public hands, with one million native trees planted to promote biodiversity and better flood management. They state that “our stewardship of the environment needs to be founded on sound principles and based on scientific assessments”.

The **Liberal Democrats** would introduce a new Nature Act placing the Natural Capital Committee (NCC) on a statutory footing and setting legally binding natural capital targets including on biodiversity, air and water. The NCC would be empowered to recommend actions to meet these targets. Water management would be reformed and efficiency standards improved in order to “protect and restore England’s lakes, rivers and wetlands”. One tree would be planted per UK citizen over the next 10 years, and ancient woodlands would be protected. A “blue belt” of protected marine areas would be established, as would a £2 billion flood prevention fund for small community and council-led schemes. They would “significantly increase” the amount of accessible green space, including creating a new designation of “national nature parks” to protect up to one million acres. They would “provide greater resources for international environmental co-operation, particularly on climate change and on actions to tackle illegal and unsustainable trade in timber, wildlife, ivory and fish.”

Plaid Cymru would consolidate Welsh wildlife legislation to create a new Wildlife Act for Wales.

The **UK Independence Party** state that they would “promote evidence-based environmental schemes”. They would safeguard protection for Britain’s wildlife, nature reserves, areas of outstanding natural beauty, countryside and coastlines. They would give ancient woodland “wholly exceptional status” and ensure that major infrastructure projects give greater respect to “irreplaceable natural habitats”. Planning legislation would be amended to promote green space in new developments and better drainage.

4. Agriculture and land management

Under the **Conservatives**, the UK would “grow more, sell more and export more great British food”. They would provide stability to farmers as we leave the EU whilst setting up new frameworks to support food production and countryside stewardship. Farmers will receive the same cash total in farm support until the end of the next Parliament. In the next Parliament a new “agri-environment system” will be introduced, developed with “farmers, food producers and environmental experts”. They would expand Natural England’s provision of technical expertise to farmers “to deliver environmental improvements on a landscape scale”, including “enriching soil fertility and planting hedgerows”.

The **Green Party** would “create more sustainable farming and land-use policies” focused on “restoring the UK’s natural environment”. They would promote an “ecologically sustainable farming system” focused on supporting family farms and re-localising food production”, with funding for restoring biodiversity, sustainable land management, improving animal welfare and tackling climate change. They would end the badger cull.

Labour would “champion sustainable farming” by “investing in and promoting skills, technology, market access and innovation”. They would “prioritise a sustainable, long-term future for farming, fishing and food industries”, with funds reconfigured to support “smaller traders, local economies, community benefits and sustainable practices”. Neonicotinoid pesticides would be prohibited, and the culling of badgers to tackle bovine tuberculosis ended.

The **Liberal Democrats** would reform agricultural subsidies, refocusing support away from direct subsidy towards “the public benefits that come from effective land management, including countryside protection, flood prevention, food production and climate-change mitigation”. Smaller farms would be favoured under a more localised agricultural policy. “Safe, effective, humane and evidence-based” ways of controlling bovine TB would be developed, including vaccination. Use of neonicotinoid pesticides would be suspended until proven not to harm pollinators.

Plaid Cymru will fight to ensure that all European farm payments are replaced by the UK government, and for the best possible Brexit deal for Welsh agriculture.

The Scottish National Party expect all powers over agriculture to be repatriated to Scotland when the UK leaves the EU, and for the Scottish Government to have full control over agricultural funding.

The **UK Independence Party** would continue to make the same level of funding available to support the agricultural sector, with a “UK Single Farm Payment” modelled on the EU system, but more “ethical”. Payments would be capped and targeted towards smaller farms. Payments would be conditional on meeting environmental standards based on the 2013 CAP Entry Level Stewardship conditions, with incentives for organic farming and reducing antibiotic use. “There will be no set-aside, cropping or rotation restrictions”.

5. Fisheries

The **Conservatives** would work with the fishing industry, our “world-class marine scientists” and the devolved administrations to “introduce a new regime for commercial fishing that will preserve and increase

fish stocks and help to ensure prosperity for a new generation of fishermen”. They would withdraw from the London Fisheries Convention.

The **Green Party** would demand that any new fisheries legislation contains “a legal requirement to fish below a level that allows fish stocks to fully recover” and would promote locally-led fishing operations supporting local economies, whilst ending damaging fishing operations in protected areas.

Labour would reconfigure funds for fishing to “support smaller traders, local economies, community benefits and sustainable practices”. They will establish a science innovation fund, working with farmers and fisheries, to include support for our small scale fishing fleet.

The **Liberal Democrats** would “defend and maintain our fishing industry by not allowing fishing rights to be traded away against other policy areas” and work with industry and stakeholders to “develop a national plan for sustainable fisheries”.

The **Scottish National Party** will demand scrapping or fundamental reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and support Scottish control of Scottish fisheries, expecting all powers to be fully devolved to Scotland after Brexit.

The **UK Independence Party** supports the full restoration of the UK’s maritime sovereignty, with control over our exclusive economic zone stretching 200 miles off the coast and the only constraints on our fishing fleet determined by the UK Parliament. They will repeal the London Fisheries Convention. They would end discards, introduce a licence fee option for selected foreign vessels to fish in the UK’s territorial waters, and launch a collaborative consultation with the fishing community to draft a new Fisheries Bill.

6. Climate change

The **Conservatives** would “continue to lead international action on climate change”, pursuing an energy policy based around “reliable and affordable energy, seizing the industrial opportunity that new technology presents and meeting out global commitments on climate change”. They would develop the shale gas industry in Britain, whilst upholding “rigorous environmental protections”, including establishing a new “Shale Environmental Regulator”.

The **Green Party** state that they “will always act strongly on climate change”. They would aim to strengthen the global deal, “including by delivering climate justice and promoting ecological sustainable development”, and push to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. Climate commitments would be embedded within trade rules. Fracking would be banned, with a focus on “clean green efficient renewable energy of the future”.

Labour would aim to put the UK “back on track to meet the targets in the Climate Change Act and the Paris agreement”, and follow an energy policy based on security of supply, affordability and ensuring we “meet our climate change targets and transition to a low-carbon economy”. Fracking would be banned on emissions grounds. Labour would continue to work constructively with the EU on climate change, and “reclaim” Britain’s “leading role” internationally, “working hard to preserve the Paris Agreement and deliver on international commitments”.

The **Liberal Democrats** would “support the Paris agreement by ensuring that the UK meets its own climate commitments and plays a leadership role in international efforts to combat climate change” They would pass a Zero-Carbon Britain Act setting new legally binding targets to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2040 and to zero by 2050. They oppose fracking but would aim to generate 60% of electricity from renewables by 2030. They would create an “Office for Environmental Responsibility to scrutinise the government’s efforts to meet its environmental targets”, placing a responsibility on every government agency to account for its contribution towards meeting climate targets.

Plaid Cymru would introduce a new Climate Change Act, adopting “ambitious but achievable greenhouse gas and pollution reduction targets for 2030 and 2050”.

The **Scottish National Party** will “fight climate change” and continue “to champion low cost renewable energy”. They would promote the renewable energy industry in Scotland, in particular wind, and carbon capture and storage. They would press the UK Government to “match Scotland’s commitment and ambition” to meeting ambitious emissions reduction targets. They would aim to prevent Brexit being used to undermine UK and EU efforts to tackle climate change.

The **UK Independence Party** would repeal the 2008 Climate Change Act, claiming it has “no basis in science”, and withdraw from the Paris Agreement. They support an energy mix including coal, shale gas, nuclear, oil, solar and hydro. Fracking would not be permitted in National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.