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News story

Environmental Principles Policy Statement published

The statement will embed protections and enhancements for the environment in government policy-making.

From: [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs \(/government/organisations/departments/departments-for-environment-food-rural-affairs\)](/government/organisations/departments/departments-for-environment-food-rural-affairs) and [Rebecca Pow MP \(/government/people/rebecca-pow\)](/government/people/rebecca-pow)

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Ministers will have a duty to consider opportunities to protect and enhance the environment

Related content

[Environmental principles policy statement \(/government/publications/environmental-principles-policy-statement\)](/government/publications/environmental-principles-policy-statement)

A new legally-binding [policy statement](#)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-principles-policy-statement>), published today, will embed protections and enhancements for the environment in all government policy-making.

The statement will guide ministers across government towards opportunities to prevent environmental damage whilst supporting innovation and sustainable development, in line with five internationally recognised principles. This will ensure the environment is embedded into the design and development of the Government's work.

Following a public [consultation](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consultation-launched-on-environmental-principles) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consultation-launched-on-environmental-principles>), the Government has listened to feedback and strengthened the policy statement in a number of areas, including:

- ensuring there is clarity on the need to consider opportunities for environmental enhancement;
- emphasising the importance of embedding the environmental principles right from the outset; and
- recognising policy can have both a positive and negative influence on the environment.

Today's publication marks the next step in the delivery of the Environment Act, after [setting out the strategic priorities for Ofwat](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pow-water-industry-must-do-more-to-protect-the-environment) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pow-water-industry-must-do-more-to-protect-the-environment>) to make water companies do more to protect the environment, and [consulting on legally-binding environmental targets](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/delivering-on-the-environment-act-new-targets-announced-and-ambitious-plans-for-nature-recovery) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/delivering-on-the-environment-act-new-targets-announced-and-ambitious-plans-for-nature-recovery>) on air quality, biodiversity, water and waste & resource efficiency.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

[Defra nature recovery green paper consultation: Environment Agency response](#) (</government/publications/defra-nature-recovery-green-paper-consultation-environment-agency-response>)

[Defra environmental targets consultation: Environment Agency response](#) (</government/publications/defra-environmental-targets-consultation-environment-agency-response>)

[Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots: lessons learned](#) (</government/publications/local-nature-recovery-strategy-pilots-lessons-learned>)

[The Environment Bill: RPC opinion](#) (</government/publications/the-environment-bill-rpc-opinion>)

“ Our environmental principles will ensure we put the environment at the heart of the Government’s work across Whitehall.

“ Ministers will have a duty under the Environment Act to consider opportunities to protect and enhance the environment, ensuring that we leave it in a better state for future generations.”

The principles are:

- The integration principle states that policy-makers should look for opportunities to embed environmental protection in other fields of policy that have impacts on the environment;
- The prevention principle means that government policy should aim to prevent environmental harm;
- The rectification at source principle means that any environmental damage should, as a priority, be addressed at its origin to avoid the need to remedy its effects later;
- The polluter pays principle makes clear that those who cause environmental damage should be responsible for mitigation or compensation; and
- The precautionary principle states that where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, a lack of scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Defra will support government departments in understanding and applying the requirements of the new duty in their policymaking. They will provide information workshops and training, and seek to

incorporate the principles into existing government policy guidance documents, such as the Treasury's Green Book.

The draft statement has been laid before Parliament for scrutiny before the final statement is published. Defra aims to publish the final Environmental Principles Policy Statement in autumn this year.

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