



# Great British Energy Bill: Briefing for Lords Committee

This briefing is on behalf of environmental coalition [Wildlife and Countryside Link](#) ahead of Committee Stage of the Great British Energy Bill in the House of Lords from 3 December 2024.

30 November 2024

*Updated with amendment numbers from marshalled list of amendments [here](#)*

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## **Amendments we support:**

### **Amendment 116: Climate and Nature Duty**

Tabled by Baroness Hayman

The nature and climate crises are inextricable, and effective solutions must be delivered together. While the climate crisis is one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss, it is also important to recognise the pivotal role that nature should play in climate efforts: restoring nature has the potential to provide a third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed to meet global 2030 climate targets.<sup>1</sup> The Government recognised the close links between climate and nature in their manifesto.

The Great British Energy Bill delivers on a manifesto commitment to set up a publicly-owned company that will develop renewable energy projects and co-invest in projects with the private sector.

In its current form, however, the Bill strays from the joint nature and climate approach set out in the manifesto the Government was elected on. The paucity of governance objectives on the face of the Bill leaves out the climate imperative behind the creation of GB Energy and omits any mention of nature.

**The amendment tabled by Baroness Hayman would rectify this omission, giving GB Energy a climate and nature duty.** This duty will place a clear and active requirement on GB Energy to do what it reasonably can within its means to contribute to the achievement of climate mitigation targets set under the Climate Change Act 2008 and biodiversity targets set under the Environment Act 2021.

The nature recovery element of the proposed duty would give GB Energy statutory direction to invest in clean energy projects that meet the highest environmental standards, embed wildlife-friendly design into renewable energy project design, and create more space for nature on development sites. It would require GB Energy to factor the UK's critical natural infrastructure into its planning, projects and

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<sup>1</sup> See material on Nature-based solutions: <https://nature4climate.org/natures-solutions/>



investment decisions, and deliver more nature-based solutions on land and at sea, from providing space for fish species around offshore wind turbines<sup>2</sup> to wildflower planting around solar farms.<sup>3</sup>

The climate element of the duty would concentrate GB Energy governance on the reason for its core activities: to mitigate climate change by delivering renewable energy to decarbonise the UK's energy supply. This will help keep the operations of the body aligned with the environmental mission set out in the manifesto the Government was elected on. It will also help provide balance to the nature element of the duty, allowing decisions to be made on occasions that do not directly contribute to the achievement of Environment Act targets, but do contribute to Climate Change Act targets. Whilst we hope that most GB Energy projects can include a nature aspect, this may not always be possible.

Over the past month the Government has recognised the importance of public bodies to help achieve climate and nature targets and the importance of statutory requirements to do so. In November, the Water (Special Measures) Bill was amended at Lords Report stage to give Ofwat a climate and nature Duty.<sup>4</sup> Earlier in the same month the Crown Estate Bill was successfully amended at Lords report stage to require Crown Estate Commissioners to “keep under review the impact of their activities on the achievement of sustainable development.” The Minister confirmed at the despatch box that “this regard includes, where relevant, consideration of relevant legislation, such as Part 1 of the Climate Change Act 2008, which deals with the targets for 2050, Section 56 of the Climate Change Act 2008, and Sections 1 to 3 of the Environment Act 2021.”<sup>5</sup> Earl Russell has also tabled a similar amendment to the GB Energy Bill which would require GB Energy to keep under review the impact of their activities on sustainable development.

GB Energy, envisioned as a partner body for the Crown Estate in the delivery of new renewable energy should be given matching requirements in this area, through a clear duty to actively contribute to climate and nature targets.

The setting up of GB Energy is an opportunity for the Government to create a modern company which is fit to tackle the dual climate and nature crises and deliver the most public benefit. A nature recovery duty would be a straightforward, cost-effective way to ensure that GB Energy delivers for nature recovery and climate hand-in-hand, boosting efforts to achieve the Government's environmental mission.

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<sup>2</sup> Watson et al (2024) on offshore wind farms and ecosystem services:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0964569124000085?via%3Dihub>

<sup>3</sup> Lancaster University study (2024) on benefits for bees and butterflies from solar parks:

<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/news/new-evidence-shows-uk-solar-parks-can-provide-for-bees-and-butterflies>

<sup>4</sup> Hansard of Water (Special Measures) Bill Lords Report Stage: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-11-20/debates/F4BA2123-484A-49DA-A1E5-9F3EC3265CBD/Water\(SpecialMeasures\)Bill\(HL\)#contribution-2FF058D4-9121-4193-8442-3051527A118F](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-11-20/debates/F4BA2123-484A-49DA-A1E5-9F3EC3265CBD/Water(SpecialMeasures)Bill(HL)#contribution-2FF058D4-9121-4193-8442-3051527A118F)

<sup>5</sup> Hansard of Crown Estate Bill Lords Report Stage: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-11-05/debates/87F39AF7-D17F-46DE-8E47-660D28D00AF9/CrownEstateBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-11-05/debates/87F39AF7-D17F-46DE-8E47-660D28D00AF9/CrownEstateBill(HL))



The need for a climate and nature duty for GB Energy was raised by peers from across parties at the Lords Second Reading of the Great British Energy Bill on 18 November 2024.<sup>6</sup> During the earlier passage of the Bill through the Commons, Green MP Siân Berry made a strong case for a nature recovery duty amendment tabled by Adrian Ramsay MP, Pippa Heylings MP, and others, setting out how a statutory duty for nature is necessary to ensure nature considerations are embedded in GB Energy.<sup>7</sup>

We urge the Government to accept this amendment and give GB Energy a duty to deliver for climate and nature, further smoothing the path to net zero. This duty should be on the face of the Bill and cascaded through into the Statement of Strategic Priorities for GB Energy, which the Secretary of State must prepare. These Priorities should be published whilst the Bill is before Parliament, to enable scrutiny.

### **Amendments 30 and 33: Biomass amendments**

Tabled by Baroness Boycott

The burning of wood for biomass fuels sets back climate and nature action. It is claimed by the bioenergy industry that the carbon dioxide released by the combustion of woody biomass can be offset by the regrowth of forests – but this takes years or decades. This means that woody biomass from forests (in the UK's case, usually imported<sup>8</sup>) increases carbon dioxide in the atmosphere for many years or decades. It certainly cannot contribute to the Government's goal of clean power by 2030.

Currently, the Bill includes as an object for GB Energy the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from energy produced from fossil fuels. However, this does not include energy produced from woody biomass, which is not currently defined as a fossil fuel.

**The amendment (33) tabled by Baroness Boycott would ensure biomass energy production is not within the definition of clean energy and so not within scope for GB Energy's potential investments.** The supporting amendment (30) would also define biomass so that GB Energy can exclude it. We urge the Government to accept these amendments which would ensure that GB Energy does not build or invest in bioenergy projects which undermine climate and nature action.

Bioenergy which burns woody biomass actively harms nature restoration efforts<sup>9</sup> and will not contribute to GB Energy's goals of clean energy, energy independence, nor cheaper energy bills.

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<sup>6</sup> Hansard GB Energy Bill Lords Second Reading: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-11-18/debates/8F32156C-2E30-4331-AAB5-1F73E49366EF/GreatBritishEnergyBill>

<sup>7</sup> Hansard of GB Energy Bill Commons Report Stage: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-29/debates/57EEE143-47B0-4F2A-92EF-23478242F91B/GreatBritishEnergyBill#contribution-D22FA0E3-95EC-44D2-8F64-5B3C21982EB6>

<sup>8</sup> [The global land use impact of the United Kingdom's biomass consumption Part 1: Biomass flows through the UK economy – an overview of biomass sources and overseas land requirements | JNCC Resource Hub](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Wildlife and Countryside Link bioenergy position paper.pdf](#)



## **Amendments 11 and 15: Community energy amendments**

Tabled by Earl Russell

Low carbon and renewable energy schemes owned by, or part owned by, community organisations, can offer huge benefits for climate and nature action. Community Energy England estimates that over 165,000 tonnes of carbon savings were made in 2023 from the generation of renewable energy by community-owned projects.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the clean energy generation potential of community-owned schemes, these schemes provide local jobs and address local fuel poverty.<sup>11</sup> For example, a social enterprise in London called Repowering has, to date, helped develop six solar energy projects, resulting in lowering emissions by 114 tonnes a year and creating over £150,000 for local communities.<sup>12</sup>

**We urge the Government to accept the amendments 11 and 15 tabled by Earl Russell to give GB Energy a specific remit to support community-owned energy projects, by including community energy in its objects and in the Statement of Strategic Priorities.** By supporting and harnessing the power of communities, GB Energy can make strides towards decarbonising the electricity system, as well as providing co-benefits for nature and communities.

Baroness Hayman’s amendment (56 on the marshalled list) to require the Secretary of State to consult the Climate Change Committee, Natural England, and other key advisory bodies before publishing the Statement of Strategic Priorities for GB Energy would ensure that the strategic priorities are informed by the best evidence.

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Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is the largest nature coalition in England, bringing together 85 organisations to use their joint voice for the protection of the natural world and animals.

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<sup>10</sup>[https://communityenergyengland.org/files/document/960/1720710752\\_CommunityEnergyStateoftheSector2024UKOverview.pdf](https://communityenergyengland.org/files/document/960/1720710752_CommunityEnergyStateoftheSector2024UKOverview.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ippr.org/media-office/fmake-a-third-of-new-onshore-green-energy-community-owned-to-share-benefits-of-net-zero-transition-ippr>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.repowering.org.uk/>