From:

South East Climate Alliance
Bedfordshire Climate Change Forum
Bristol Climate and Nature Partnership
Climate Action Network West Midlands
Cumbria Sustainability Network
Dorset Climate Action Network
Hampshire Climate Action Network
Leeds Climate Action
Oxfordshire Climate Action Network
South Yorkshire Climate Alliance
Surrey Climate Commission
Wiltshire Climate Alliance
Climate Emergency UK

To:

Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

Cc:

Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Net Zero

Toby Perkins MP, Chair of Environmental Audit Committee

12th February, 2025

Dear Angela Rayner and Jim McMahon,

Re: **English Devolution White Paper, Power and Partnership: Foundations for Growth**

Call for Statutory Duties on Climate and Nature

This letter has been initiated by the South East Climate Alliance and comes with the support of 13 climate networks from across England. Together we represent hundreds of community, environment and faith groups, all of them working for climate and nature in their local area.

We welcome the inclusion of environment and climate change in the Devolution White Paper, but we believe a crucial opportunity is being lost. Without statutory duties, Strategic Authorities will lack the mandate, resources, and accountability necessary to drive climate action effectively.

The climate and nature crises pose serious risks to economic growth and infrastructure resilience. Climate, nature, transport, spatial planning and health must be addressed together in integrated strategic planning.

To ensure meaningful progress, we urge the Government to establish statutory duties for climate and nature at the Strategic Authority level

Our key recommendations are:

1. **Statutory Climate and Nature Duties for Strategic Authorities**

   Strategic Authorities should have a duty to produce a Climate and Nature Strategy and Plan alongside the duties already proposed to produce a Local Growth Plan (2.3.1) and a Spatial Development Strategy (3.5).

2. **Climate and Nature Outcomes in the Settlement Framework**

   The Integrated Settlement Outcomes Framework (5.1.1) should include stringent, ambitious and measurable Climate and Nature outcomes.

3. **Incorporating Climate and Nature Data into Decision-Making**

   Climate and Nature Data should be included in the data produced by the proposed Mayoral Data Council (2.3.4) to aid investment and planning.

4. **Embedding a "Climate and Nature in All Policies" Approach**

   Just as Strategic Authorities will promote a "health in all policies" approach (3.8), they should also be expected to ensure a "climate and nature in all policies" approach with these considerations embedded across all functions. This would have regard to the need to reduce emissions, look for climate mitigation and adaptation opportunities and replenish nature in the exercise of all their functions.

5. **Coordinated Action Between Strategic Authorities and Unitary Councils**

   The duty to produce a Climate and Nature Strategy should be accompanied by a requirement on a Strategic Authority together with its unitary councils to create a co-ordinated action plan. The plan should achieve a clear emission reduction trajectory, increase renewable generation and enhance biodiversity. Performance should be monitored and reported at all levels against the plan both to Government and local people.

6. **Strengthening Community Engagement**

   Much of the success in tackling climate change and nature restoration depends on local engagement. Community, environmental, and faith groups play a vital role in driving awareness and action. As local governance structures shift towards unitary councils, there is a risk that the relationships built between borough/district councils and local climate groups may be lost.

   We urge that new governance arrangements include the requirement to build structured and systematic partnerships with community-led climate and nature initiatives.

Conclusion

Embedding climate and nature duties within devolution frameworks is essential for securing sustainable growth and resilient communities. We urge you to seize this opportunity and ensure that the new governance structures emerging from the

Devolution White Paper put climate and nature at the heart of strategic decision-making.

Thank you for your attention,

Sally Barnard
Chris Holloway

South East Climate Alliance

The South East Climate Alliance is an alliance over 140 environment, community and faith groups from across the South East uniting for urgent action on climate and nature. Its membership is drawn from East and West Sussex, Hampshire, Surrey and Kent

Co-signatories:

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