



CEN's
Councillor magazine

Autumn edition

**CONSERVATIVE
ENVIRONMENT
NETWORK**

Rt Hon Theresa May MP | Cllr Joe Porter | Cllr Ian Nellins
Policy briefings | CEN campaigns | Councillor success stories

Conservative Environment Network

We are the independent forum for conservatives in the UK and around the world who support net zero, nature restoration, and resource security.



“ I am proud to support CEN and the excellent work that you do. CEN has played an invaluable role in our Party over the last decade, with some notable achievements, including campaigning to scrap VAT on insulation, and securing a Natural History GCSE. ”

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak



“ It's a really strong caucus in the House of Commons with a very strong and fundamental belief in the environment. And actually, if I may say so, it has been a significant influence on UK government policy over a considerable amount of time. ”

Conservative Party Chairman Greg Hands

Join the Conservative Environment Network

If you want to get involved and learn more about conservative environmentalism, join our growing networks.

Supporter Network - Benefits include exclusive events and newsletters on key environmental debates.

Councillor Network - Benefits include exclusive briefings, case studies, discussions and newsletter for councillors leading on the environment locally.

Join us now using the QR codes.



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Become a CEN Councillor

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Our work

We bring conservatives together to debate environmental issues, find consensus, and champion conservative solutions.

As conservative environmentalists, we believe that man-made climate change and the decline of nature are a threat to our national prosperity and security.

We believe only a conservative approach can unite people, grow our economy, and protect our environment.

We support science-based environmental action, which empowers individuals and harnesses the power of the free market.

Our network

We work with like-minded conservative parliamentarians, councillors, and supporters from the UK and overseas.

- Over 140 MPs and peers are members of CEN's Parliamentary Caucus.
- Over 400 councillors are members of CEN's Councillor Network.
- Over 800 conservatives have joined CEN's Supporter Network.
- More than 300 legislators from over 45 countries have signed our Centre-Right Climate Action Declaration.

Join our growing network today.

www.cen.uk.com

[@CEN_HQ](https://www.instagram.com/CEN_HQ)

Director's note

Introducing our new councillor magazine



Thank you for reading CEN's inaugural councillor magazine. We're launching this new publication on the tenth anniversary of CEN's establishment and hope to send three a year to Conservative councillors across the UK. As we turn ten, we have much to celebrate. There are many more vocal advocates for the environment among conservative politicians than when CEN was set up. Environmental ambition levels have been raised and positive steps to deliver our targets have been taken. There remains much more to do, but we should be proud of how far we have come.

Despite CEN's youth, concern for the environment has always been core to British conservatism. Anyone who has attended a CEN event or read a publication over the past ten years will know that the great philosophers of conservatism, Edmund Burke and Sir Roger Scruton, both argue the core conservative instinct to hand on a good inheritance to future generations is best exemplified in the environment. A succession of conservative leaders from Margaret Thatcher to David Cameron have been vocal advocates of environmentalism and taken bold action while in office.

CEN's role, during the ten years of its existence, has been to remind the conservative movement of this heritage. In the past, there was a sense that conservatives had little to say on the environment, that the environment was a left-wing topic, and that tackling threats to the natural world inevitably meant adopting left-wing solutions. In short, conservatives didn't feel they had permission to speak up on the great environmental challenges of our time. That is now changing.

Having launched our councillor network in 2019, it now has over 400 members. Councillors play a central role in our network, alongside 140 parliamentarians in our caucus, 16 MSPs in our Scottish Parliamentary Group and over 800 grassroots supporters.

Looking back at this period of Conservative government, emissions reduction has been one of its greatest success stories. Reforming the wasteful and environmentally harmful Common Agricultural Policy is set to be one of the most significant benefits of Brexit. And COP26 was the biggest diplomatic event the UK has ever hosted, securing measurable improvements to global climate ambition.

But while I hope conservatives take great pride in what the party has achieved in government, I also hope they are not complacent about what remains to be done. Nature is still in decline. Public concern about the state of our rivers remains. The impacts of climate change are increasingly felt around the world. UK emissions have fallen substantially in the power sector, but progress has been slower elsewhere.

Councillors will be essential for delivering the environmental measures we need, in a way that is tailored to local circumstances and aligned with their residents' preferences. We hope this magazine can showcase the many pioneering environmental initiatives from Conservative councillors.

Sam Hall is Director of the Conservative Environment Network

MP's letter

Theresa May argues only Tories can deliver net zero

We are the only party with conserve in our name. To be a conservative is to conserve. The fundamental understanding at the heart of our philosophy is that we in the present, we today, are the guardians of our inheritance for those who went before us and we want to pass that on to future generations.

So conservatism and conservation are natural allies.

And that's why back in 2019 I committed the UK to that legislative move in putting 2050 target for net zero emissions into law. It made us the first major economy in the world to set a legally binding goal. And where we led, others have followed.

And why did we do it? Well, we did it for a number of reasons. We did it because climate change is the greatest threat to civilisation as we know it is. It's a threat to our national prosperity, it's a threat to our national security, but it is also an opportunity. It's an opportunity to lead the world. And it's a target to which the party and the government remain committed.

Net zero isn't a cost to be minimised - it shouldn't be seen as that. It is the growth opportunity of the century. It isn't an act of economic harm, because we've already shown that we can cut our emissions and grow our economy at the same time.

Net zero isn't about a bossy state telling people what to do. We shouldn't be out there wagging our fingers and saying 'you must never fly again', 'you can never drive a car again', or 'you can never eat meat again.' If we do that, we won't take people with us. And as the Prime Minister has said, we must take people with us.

We conservatives are absolutely right to be embracing net zero.

Because it's only we conservatives who understand that what we need is not a bureaucratic solution to the problem, but a market-led solution to the problem.

A lot has been made of the result of the Uxbridge by-election. That was not won on an anti-environment ticket. It was won on an anti-ULEZ ticket. I know that because of having talked to people in the constituency when I was knocking on doors during the campaign myself.

YouGov's tracker shows that when asked what the most important issues are facing the country, the environment is consistently the fourth highest ranked issue.

The worst thing that could happen would be to give Labour the lead on net zero.

That's not in our party's interest. But more than that, it is not in the interest of this country. We know that people are not better off with Labour and we know the country is not better off with Labour.

So don't let Labour squander the economic opportunity that is ahead of us.

Rt Hon Theresa May MP is the former Prime Minister for the United Kingdom



CEN policy briefing

Decarbonising SMEs: what you can do in your local area?

Britain's communities are built on small local businesses: they provide jobs and vital services, foster a sense of local pride, and contribute £1 trillion to the economy.

Research shows that SMEs want to reduce their environmental impact. Many see the sustainability of their businesses as key to their reputation and long-term viability and as an opportunity to reduce their energy bills permanently.

The decarbonisation of SMEs will be an integral part of the UK reaching our climate change targets. Small businesses account for half of UK business emissions.

However, whilst SMEs recognise the importance of decarbonisation, 9 out of 10 say they lack the knowledge, time, resources, and cash flow to undertake it.

So how can councillors point them in the right direction to the knowledge and skills they need, as well as supporting them with funding?

Increasingly, there are digital resources which can raise businesses' awareness of where they are producing the most carbon emissions. For instance, Sage offers carbon accounting software which uses accounting data to build a business's carbon footprint.

However, there can be little doubt that more peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and a library of information would help SMEs to decarbonise their business. Councils can help facilitate this by organising open days and roundtable discussions for local businesses to share best practice examples and speak about the challenges they are facing.

We hosted a webinar on how SMEs can decarbonise with: Saqib Bhatti MP, Vice Chair of the Conservative Party for Business; Cllr Ian Nellins, Climate and Environment Briefholder at Shropshire Council; Katrina Sale, Chair of the Green Entrepreneurs Forum; and Henrik Micski, Principal Climate Scientist at Sage and director of a small business. Scan the barcode to watch the webinar.

We have also put together a short briefing to highlight what councils can do to support their local businesses with decarbonisation and spotlighted some of the great work your Conservative councillor colleagues are doing in the UK.

Isabel Goodwin is Senior Outreach Manager at the Conservative Environment Network



Scan the barcode to view CEN's 'Decarbonising SMEs' briefing. Or you can contact the CEN team on info@cen.uk.com

Local success story

How Shropshire Council is supporting local businesses to reduce emissions



My local businesses tell me that they want to decarbonise but limited resources, time, and money are the key obstacles preventing them. At Shropshire Council we have introduced a number of initiatives targeted at supporting businesses financially and equipping them with resources.

Sharing guidance:

Shropshire Council hosted a breakfast with the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership for local businesses to meet experts and get information and guidance on sustainable energy solutions, funding sources, and sustainable energy solutions.

The breakfast included two panels for businesses to share their experience and expertise on decarbonisation, as well as demonstrate to attendees how reporting and cutting emissions helped them to become more resilient to supply shocks and the effects of climate change.

We have also provided carbon literacy training for local businesses through the Marches Growth Hub, with 19 businesses now certified as carbon literate. The training has helped raise awareness of their emissions and set out how they can start creating plans for their businesses' long-term sustainability.

Accessing expertise:

Cool Shropshire & Telford is a £20,000 initiative to help small businesses improve their sustainability. This scheme has enabled up to 1,000 firms to access expertise from environmental consultants to help

them future proof their businesses by measuring their carbon footprint and setting achievable goals and strategies to help improve sustainability.

Grant funding:

At the CEN webinar I spoke about the importance of securing funding to support businesses as they look to decarbonise. The business energy efficiency programme offered businesses in Shropshire and neighbouring counties free energy efficiency assessments. Businesses could then apply for a grant towards their energy efficiency projects.

I also spotlighted the Big Solar Co-op. They have worked with local businesses to put together commercial proposals for rooftop solar. They install, own, and manage the cost and businesses don't have to pay a capital cost. The Big Solar Co-op then sells the renewable power from the roof to the business and then any excess gets sold back to the grid.

Cllr Ian Nellins is Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport at Shropshire Council



Scan the barcode to view the zero-carbon opportunities in Shropshire and please feel free to contact me at Ian.Nellins@shropshire.gov.uk with any questions.

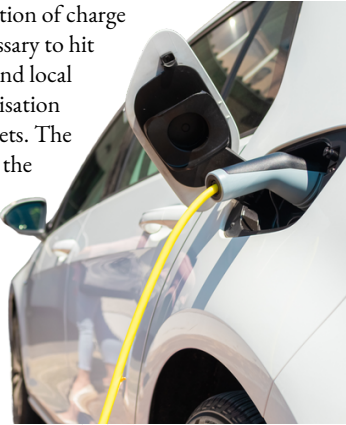
How councillors can boost electric vehicles

What are we calling for nationally?

For this Autumn Statement, we are asking the Chancellor to cut VAT on public charge points from 20% to 5% to be in line with private chargers. This will make the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) fairer for those who don't have access to off-street parking, who are often on lower incomes.

Why is it important?

Continuing to encourage the uptake of EVs and the widespread installation of charge points will be necessary to hit the government's and local councils' decarbonisation and air quality targets. The CCC suggests that the number of EVs needed to reach net zero will be 23.2 million by 2032 and 49 million by 2050.



However, two in five households in Britain lack driveways, increasing from 40% to 60% in urban areas. Due to this tax imbalance on VAT, we are potentially penalising a significant number of people who are unable to charge at home. This tax will also disproportionately impact those from lower incomes households.

Why this reform?

As conservatives, we know this transition to electric vehicles must be done fairly and affordably for motorists, bringing communities with us. Cutting

VAT on public chargers would make the EV transition fairer for drivers who choose to switch to an electric car.

It would also reassure the automotive industry that the government remains committed to the EV transition. We believe that a VAT cut would reinforce the government's recent commitments to incentivise rather than compel people to make the transition to net zero.



How can you help EV charging?

Local authorities can allow the use of utility gullies for EV charging cables to encourage EV uptake and help eliminate pavement clutter. Households without off-street parking often resort to dragging cables across the pavement, posing a safety risk to pedestrians.

Using utility gullies to trail cables will mean that households without driveways will be able to conveniently charge their cars without causing a trip hazard.

Councillors can also put out charging infrastructure contracts for tender. This allows councils to scale up rollout of EV infrastructure without adding the cost onto their residents' council tax bills. Using existing frameworks or using fast track procurement will avoid delays and minimise costs. It is worth separating contracts for fast and rapid/super rapid charging, as the latter will attract more commercial investment but needs longer contract terms.

CEN's autumn campaigns

We're calling for these national policies which could help you deliver local priorities

Cut stamp duty for more energy efficient homes

With households struggling across Britain with high energy bills, we need conservative climate policies that can help with the cost of living.

That is why CEN is calling on the government to offer a stamp duty rebate to buyers who upgrade their homes' energy efficiency after moving in.

This would incentivise homeowners to invest in insulation, resulting in reduced energy bills, while also lowering the tax burden.



Support wind farm ports to boost coastal communities

CEN is calling for further infrastructure funding and tax incentives to support port upgrades and the offshore wind supply chain.

High upfront infrastructure costs and revenue risk from not securing long-term tenants are barriers to attracting investment in ports.

By supporting the development of the offshore wind supply chain, the government can continue to help revive coastal communities.



Tax imported carbon to keep UK manufacturing competitive

Last month, the EU announced plans to start phasing in a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), a charge on carbon-intensive imports.

To make sure that our manufacturing sectors remain competitive and to create a level playing for British industry, which faces a domestic carbon price, we should phase in a British CBAM.

A CBAM is a free market approach to tackling climate change that will prevent offshoring.



CEN policy briefing

Better, greener buses: what you can do in your local area?



Surface transport (e.g. road, train) is the UK's highest-emitting sector, accounting for a quarter of the UK's total emissions in 2022. These emissions are dominated by cars, which make up over half of the sector's carbon footprint.

Increasing electric vehicle uptake will help to cut most of the sector's emissions, but public transport such as buses will also be vital to cutting carbon while widening residents' access to essential services, improving local road congestion, and boosting air quality.

On top of their environmental benefits, better bus services are also important for those who cannot afford or access private cars to get around such as the young, elderly, disabled, and those on low incomes. A comprehensive bus network can help residents access essential services, travel to work, and socialise.

Councillors can play an important part in facilitating access to bus services for their residents. For example, developing a bus strategy or partnership between local bus operators, neighbouring councils and Highways England can help to improve congestion, make services be more reliable, and better serve the needs of passengers.

Local authorities can also use their planning powers to ensure that their plans and policies encourage bus use. Councillors can do this by embedding public transport options in new developments, helping to reduce road congestion and make it easier for new residents to get around without having to use their cars.

Another option available for local authorities that would find full franchising of bus services too expensive is flexible franchising. This is where bus operators bid for the lowest amount of support they would need to operate a specific network as defined by a devolved authority.

Please scan the barcode below to view CEN's briefing on buses for more information and tips on how to boost bus usage as a local authority.

Megan Batchelor is Climate Programme Officer at the Conservative Environment Network



Please scan the barcode below to view CEN's briefing on buses for more information and tips on how to boost bus usage as a local authority. Or you can contact the CEN team on info@cen.uk.com

Decarbonising bus routes in action

Tees Flex

The Tees Flex Scheme is a trial bus service scheme operated by Stagecoach to serve the rural parts of the Tees Valley area. It aims to serve residents living in rural areas who need an affordable and reliable alternative to car travel, who are not currently served well by conventional bus routes. The project is funded by the Tees Valley Mayor and Combined Authority, costing £3 million.

While too expensive for individual councils, extensive projects like Tees Flex are well-suited to be undertaken by combined authorities or councils in partnership with each other. Passengers can call a bus through the Tees Flex app or phone number, which directs them to a nearby 'virtual bus stop' for their pick-up and drop-off points. They share the journey with other passengers making similar trips in the area.

Launched in February 2020, the scheme was initially set to last for three years but was extended for a further 18 months in early 2023. It makes 1,500 trips a week, has saved 77,000 vehicle miles, and 62% of those who travel on the service and own cars say they use their car less. More than 9,300 people have set up accounts, and the service has made over 200,000 journeys since its launch. It is used more by younger and working-age people, as concessionary pass holders stick to commercially-run services.

Norfolk Swaffham Flexibus

The Flexibus scheme is an on-demand bus service for people that live and work in and around Swaffham.

Part of Norfolk County Council's Bus Improvement Plan, the scheme is aimed at improving links within Swaffham and on to King's Lynn and Norwich. The service runs 7am-7pm from Monday to Saturday, and can be booked from two weeks to five minutes in advance by the 7,700 rural residents it serves. It is operated by Vectare, and the booking app is run by Via with an option for passengers to also book via call or online.

The scheme was made possible by a £700,000 grant from the (now-closed) Department for Transport's Rural Mobility Fund. It will allow the scheme to run for four years, after which, it is hoped, it can become financially self-sufficient. It runs both a commuter and on-demand service, and is aimed at improving rural connectivity with reliable, regular routes. It comes with a new depot in Swaffham, and has created three new full-time jobs.

All of the Flexibus fleet is fully accessible, with enough space for wheelchairs and shopping. Disabled people and those with mobility issues are also able to request an at-home pick up and drop off.



Scan the barcode to view our case study map and please email us at local@cen.uk.com if you have any case studies you would like us to add to the map.

How our council is leading the way on nature restoration

To achieve ambitious nature restoration and climate change targets, partnership work is vital during the current times of financial constraints. During my time as Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity between 2019 and 2023, we worked very closely with organisations such as Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to set us on the right path.

As Conservatives, it is important to sometimes step back and let communities and expert-led charities take control of projects if they are better placed to deliver than the council.

That is exactly what we did with our 11 countryside sites, for which Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have recently taken on the lease. They will manage the sites with teams of 'Friends' groups and volunteers, ensuring that nature is restored across these unique sites, whilst also saving the council money over a long period.

One site is Marshes Hill Common in Brown Edge, which is a lowland heathland and Site of Biological Importance, where we are setting up a Friends group to carry out conservation work on the nature reserve throughout the year.

In 2019, I commissioned Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to produce our Staffordshire Moorlands Plan for

Nature, which has recently been released with ambitious targets to halt and reverse the decline in local nature by 2030.

Our starting point is 17 percent of our land being protected for nature and, to reach the 30 percent target, we must work with farmers, landowners, residents, parish councils, businesses, community groups and environmental organisations.

As an opposition group who put in place these targets when we were running the council, we will be holding the Labour administration to account on how they deliver them – especially on ensuring every pound of taxpayers' money is spent wisely on projects to restore nature and not 'pet projects' that simply tick boxes.

Without effective partnership working in our communities, councils cannot realistically achieve ambitious environmental improvements and deliver maximum value for money for taxpayers.

Cllr Joe Porter, District Councillor for Brown Edge and Endon, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council



Join our next councillor webinar

Will new protections for local nature bulldoze plans for new homes, or help create more sustainable, greener communities?

The Environment Act requires all local authorities in England to publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) by March 2025. But what does this mean in practice?



LNRS will identify suitable locations for nature recovery and outline the practical steps that can be taken to improve our natural world.

This could be transformational for achieving the UK's target of protecting 30 percent of land for nature by 2030, improving public access to nature, and increasing environmental considerations in planning decisions.

LNRS comes on top of a range of other recent additions to the planning system, including biodiversity net gain requirements, the incoming Future Homes Standard, and updated version of the National Planning Policy Framework. The formal role of local authorities in delivering on the UK's environmental pledges is therefore growing.

So, how do councillors ensure these new requirements strengthen their arm and have a tangible impact on local planning decisions? Will the extra burden imposed on planning authorities and developers prevent new homes from being built, or help to increase public support for them?

To answer these questions and more, CEN will hold an exclusive webinar from **18:00 - 19:00 on 6th December 2023** for members of our councillor network to explore the practical implications of recent reforms to the planning system and, in particular, how local councillors should approach LNRS, what should be included, and how they can improve the quality of new designs.

Joining us for the event is **Chris Grayling MP** (former Secretary of Stat for Transport), **Cllr Marisa Heath** (Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment), and **Matt Browne** (Head of Policy and Advocacy for Wildlife and Countryside link).

Sign up to our councillors' network to put your questions to planning experts and discover how you can best deliver for your local community by scanning the barcode.



Get involved in CEN

Join our ambassadors programme



If you'd like to get more involved in CEN's work, then apply to become a CEN ambassador.

Our ambassador programme is designed to support our work promoting conservative environmentalism among grassroots supporters.

We offer ways for our ambassadors to get involved with our work, feed into our campaigns, and shape our supporter network.

We have an existing network of ambassadors but we recruit new ambassadors to our programme all year round, so we welcome applications at any time.

We are seeking well-connected ambassadors of all ages and backgrounds within the conservative movement based across the country who are passionate about the environment.

We offer our ambassadors priority invites to in-person events hosted by CEN, including our exclusive quarterly drink receptions. We also list our ambassadors on our website and publish their blogs.

We hold virtual meetings every four months with ambassadors to update them on our work, get their feedback and suggestions, and ask for their advice on future supporter events.

We also host an annual away day, including dinner and drinks, for ambassadors, where they can discuss environmental policy and review CEN's campaigns and grassroots work. The day will include talks from interesting speakers and be an opportunity to meet like-minded people.

We would like ambassadors to be at the heart of our growing supporter network, helping to bring conservatives together to discuss environmental policy, and promote more ambitious action within the conservative movement. We ask that ambassadors support this work by helping CEN with events, recruitment, representation, and feedback.

Scan the barcode above to find out more about our ambassador programme and apply to join.

Join us to debate topical environmental issues

We hold regular virtual events to give conservatives an opportunity to hear from interesting speakers and debate topical environmental issues.

We have held events to debate new oil and gas licenses, onshore wind, climate migration, voting blue to go green, and fifteen-minute cities.

Upcoming events will discuss the merits of new nuclear, the take-aways from COP28, and how to tackle pollution in our seas and rivers.

Please make sure you're signed up as a CEN councillor as these events are exclusively for our networks.

We're always keen to hear from you about what topics you'd like to discuss and hear from experts on.

Please send us any suggestions you have for our next environmental debate to info@cen.uk.com.



STONEHENGE IS OUR LINK TO THE PAST **Don't ruin its future**



Exiting tunnel within World Heritage Site

Image: National Highways

- ▶ 2.5 million EXTRA tonnes of carbon
- ▶ An economic case WORSE than HS2
- ▶ Over 228,000 people worldwide OBJECT
- ▶ 5 planning inspectors REJECTED the scheme
- ▶ High Court QUASHED the scheme's first approval
- ▶ UNESCO has threatened to REMOVE World Heritage status
- ▶ Yet the scheme has been approved AGAIN!

Help stop the damaging Stonehenge dual carriageway

www.StonehengeAlliance.org.uk

Views expressed in this advert are not necessarily those of the Conservative Environment Network



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