

# Green conservatives?

UNDERSTANDING WHAT  
CONSERVATIVES THINK  
ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

**SAM HALL**



# GREEN CONSERVATIVES?

Understanding what conservatives  
think about the environment

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## About the author

### Sam Hall

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Before joining Bright Blue, he was a Parliamentary Assistant to Graham Stuart, Conservative MP for Beverley and Holderness, focusing on energy and rural issues. Sam was educated at the University of Oxford, studying for both a BA and Master's degree in Classics.

Sam has written for *ConservativeHome*, *BusinessGreen*, *The Times*, *Yorkshire Post*, *Huffington Post*, and *Reaction Life*. He has also been quoted in the *Daily Mirror*, *The Guardian*, *BusinessGreen*, and *The Independent*.

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The polling included an online survey of 1,033 British adults and was conducted between 12th and 18th January 2017. A booster sample of 1,743 respondents, again surveyed online, was undertaken between 12th and 18th January 2017.

## Executive summary

The UK faces a number of pressing environmental challenges. Reducing carbon emissions by 80% by 2050, as legally mandated in the Climate Change Act 2008. The debating and implementation of environmental regulations after Brexit, which currently derive from EU law. Preserving and enhancing wildlife in Britain, with a 56% decline in species observed since 1970.

Bright Blue's *Green conservatism* project was established to debate, devise, and showcase new centre-right ideas to meet environmental challenges. The current Conservative Government needs to implement bold policies to meet these challenges. To successfully do this, these policies will need to command strong public support, particularly among 'conservatives.'

While there are some high-profile 'conservatives' who are sceptical about taking action to protect the environment, especially to mitigate climate change, philosophically, conservatism should be strongly associated with environmental action. It certainly has been historically, with several Conservative Governments in recent decades introducing ambitious policies to protect the environment.

This report seeks to unearth in detail what most 'conservatives' really think about environmental challenges and policies. As will be outlined in Chapter One, we think the views of 'conservatives' are best captured by analysing the views of those who vote 'Conservative'. We test their views on the environment which, for the purposes of this report, is divided in to two main parts: first, 'climate change', which

refers to changing weather patterns as a result of increased atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases; second, the ‘natural environment’, which refers to wildlife, waterways, forests, seas, air quality, and other natural features.

## Focus of this research and methodology

This report addresses the following research questions:

1. How concerned are conservatives about the environment and to what extent do they view it as a political priority?
2. Which arguments and policies to protect the environment do conservatives support?
3. In which areas of environmental policy is the greatest scepticism found among conservatives?

To answer these research questions, we designed and undertook polling of the adult general public in Britain, with a booster sample of Conservatives, as detailed in Chapter Two. This polling allowed us to compare the views of Conservatives with voters for other parties. The booster sample also enabled us to examine how different socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, region and socio-economic grade, affected Conservatives’ views on the environment. We also tested how the views of Conservatives varied according to how they voted in last year’s EU referendum and their views on manmade climate change.

This polling enabled us to identify what Conservatives think about the following issues: the importance of environmental challenges, and government focus and policies on them (Chapter Three); the future of EU environmental regulations after Brexit (Chapter Four); the different energy sources in Britain’s power sector and policies related to onshore wind deployment and the planned phase-out of the remaining coal-fired power stations (Chapter Five); the awareness of, interest in, barriers to, and popularity of policies to incentivise home energy

improvements (Chapter Six); concern about and policies to reduce air pollution (Chapter Seven); and the UK's international leadership role on the environment (Chapter Eight).

## General attitudes to the environment

Most Conservatives do not view protecting the environment as a high political priority: just 10% of Conservatives view protecting the environment as one of the three most important political issues facing them and their family. This was lower than the proportion of Labour voters (16%) and Liberal Democrats (22%).

However, the top environmental issues that Conservatives most want to see the Government champion are: first, increasing renewable energy (53% ranked it among their top three); second, improving air quality (30%); and, third, tackling climate change (29%).

Focusing specifically on climate change, most Conservatives (60%) accept the clear scientific consensus that manmade climate change is happening. In fact, accepting manmade climate change is the majority position of Conservatives regardless of socio-demographic characteristic.

When asked which arguments for tackling climate change they agreed with, Conservatives agree most with arguments about the secondary benefits of climate change policies, such as improving the natural environment (89%) and reducing dependence on finite fossil fuels (88%). The least popular argument is the appeal to trust scientific expertise on climate change, which only 68% of Conservatives agreed with.

Turning to the natural environment, a similar proportion of Conservatives (71%) are concerned about its state as are concerned about the impacts of climate change (70%). Concern for the natural environment is broadly consistent across Conservatives with different socio-demographic characteristics. Forests are the most popular natural space among Conservatives, with half wanting government to

give them priority when awarding funding or planning protections.

## The future of the environment after Brexit

Majorities of Conservatives support at least maintaining all the main EU environmental regulations after Brexit, including a majority of Conservatives that voted to Leave. The proportion of Conservatives that reported that they want to strengthen or maintain certain regulations are as follows:

- Water quality and beach cleanliness standards (96%)
- Protections for habitats and wildlife (93%)
- Air pollution reduction targets (92%)
- Household waste recycling targets (91%)
- Renewable energy generation targets (85%)
- Regulations to increase energy efficiency of household appliances (85%)
- Restrictions on use of pesticides and fertilisers in agriculture (85%)
- Fishing quotas (64%)
- A ban on production of GM crops (63%).

Most Conservatives (61%) want to see payments to farmers, which currently support food production and farming practices that improve the environment, continue after Brexit. However, Conservatives are split on whether these payments should be targeted to encourage food production (41%) or to improve the environment such as supporting tree planting or natural flood management (41%).

## The British power sector

Conservatives view renewable energy sources more favourably than nuclear or fossil fuels. When asked to rank how favourably they felt about particular sources of energy used to make electricity, Conservatives' top five energy sources were all renewable: first, solar

power; second, tidal; third, offshore wind; fourth, biomass; and fifth, onshore wind. Coal was the least popular energy source.

Interestingly, a majority of Conservatives (59%) support the further development of onshore wind farms, provided they receive no subsidies. A further 6% of Conservatives support onshore wind farms being built only if they were not in their area.

One of Bright Blue's flagship policies - to phase out the remaining coal-fired power stations in Britain by the mid-2020s - is supported by two-thirds of Conservatives. Only 8% are opposed.

## Home energy improvements

There are four main types of home energy improvements: energy efficiency measures (double glazing, loft insulation, and wall insulation), smart meters, renewable heat technologies (air-source heat pumps and biomass boilers), and decentralised renewable electricity technologies (solar panels and battery storage).

There is high awareness and uptake of energy efficiency measures among Conservatives. The most commonly installed type of home energy improvement among Conservatives is energy efficiency measures: 91% of Conservatives who have heard of double glazing have installed it; 83% of Conservatives who have heard of loft insulation have installed it; and 65% of Conservatives who have heard of wall insulation have installed it.

Strong interest in the other home energy improvements has not really translated in to installations: 53% of Conservatives that have heard of smart meters are interested in installing them, but have not done so yet; 41% solar panels; and 26% battery storage and air-source heat pumps.

The main barrier that is preventing Conservatives from installing these measures is, by far, high upfront cost. A lack of information about the different options and incompatibility with current property are also commonly-cited barriers to greater uptake.

There is strong support among Conservatives for Bright Blue's two

policies to address these barriers: 66% of Conservatives support the introduction of a new government-backed loan to fund the upfront cost of home energy improvement measures, which is then paid back through energy bills; a new national information service for the public to explain the different home energy technologies available and to provide a list of local tradespeople equipped to install them is supported by 79% of Conservatives.

Conservatives also support two new targeted regulations that Bright Blue has recently advocated which would increase uptake of home energy improvements: 70% of Conservatives support a new rule that all homes being sold must first meet a minimum energy performance rating (EPC), with some exemptions, such as for listed buildings or fuel poor households; 80% of Conservatives support introducing new building regulations to ensure people having large home renovations also include measures to improve a home's energy efficiency.

## Air pollution

Only a minority of Conservatives (37%), albeit sizeable, are concerned about local air pollution. This is lower than the proportion of Liberal Democrat (45%) and Labour (54%) voters. Conservatives are more likely to be concerned about local air pollution if they are younger, have a lower socio-economic grade, are women, or live in London. This could be reflective of greater awareness of the issue or living in a location more affected by air pollution.

Conservatives are strongly supportive, however, of policies to reduce air pollution. The most popular policy to reduce air pollution is investment in clean public transport, with 82% of Conservatives supporting this. The next two most popular policies are: increasing regulations on new diesel engines (74%) and government support for electric charge points (68%). Raising taxes on diesel cars, such as VAT, Vehicle Excise Duty, or Fuel Duty is the only policy we test where only a minority of Conservatives (39%) support it.

One of Bright Blue's flagship policies - to enable all cities in England to set up low emission zones in pollution hotspots - is supported by a majority of Conservatives (57%).

## **The UK's international role on the environment**

A clear majority of Conservatives (71%) are proud of the UK passing the world-leading Climate Change Act in 2008 to limit greenhouse gas emissions, Although Remain-voting Conservatives were more likely than Leave-voting Conservatives to agree, most Conservative Leavers said they were proud. The most common reason for this, chosen by 39% of Conservatives, was that it enabled the UK to take advantage of the economic opportunities from new low-carbon industries.

Reversing deforestation was the global environmental issue that most Conservatives wanted the UK Government to focus on next, with 67% putting it among the top three. This was followed by increasing ambition to tackle climate change, which was selected by 51% of Conservatives. Only a very small minority of Conservatives (14%) think the UK Government should not seek to influence environmental issues in other countries.'

## **Main trends**

As the report shows throughout, there is not significant variation among Conservatives by socio-demographic characteristic in their views on the environment. However, there are some general trends: younger Conservatives and Remain-voting Conservatives are consistently more likely to support environmental policies, particularly those relating to climate change. There are also socio-demographic characteristics that make Conservatives sometimes likely to support environmental policies, such as living in London and being a woman. But it is significant that the variation is usually only a matter of degrees, rather than shifting the majority view from overall opposition to overall support.

The final chapter (Chapter Nine) summarised the nine main findings from the report:

- One of the most important environmental issues for Conservatives was climate change.
- Conservatives consistently express concern about the natural environment.
- Conservatives care about the environment but are less likely to view it as a priority than voters from some other parties.
- Conservatives are very supportive of renewable energy relative to other sources of energy and want the Government to encourage it.
- Conservatives strongly support policies to reduce air pollution, although only a minority are concerned about air pollution locally.
- Conservatives support many particular policies that protect the environment, including targeted government regulation that is often thought controversial on the centre-right.
- Conservatives want to either maintain or strengthen the main current EU environmental regulations after Brexit.
- Conservatives do not want to see the UK stepping back from its international leadership role on the environment.
- There is significant potential demand among Conservatives for installing home energy improvements that could be unlocked with popular policies.

This report has shown that a majority of Conservatives are concerned about climate change and the natural environment. They support many environmental policies, including those that Bright Blue has advocated as part of our *Green conservatism* project. There is no mandate from its own voters, therefore, for the Conservative Government to scale back environmental policies. Instead, there is strong support among all kinds of Conservatives for the Government to adopt a more ambitious, conservative agenda on the environment.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The environment is rarely seen as a priority for voters in Britain. One recent poll by YouGov saw just 11% of respondents place the environment in their top three political priorities.<sup>1</sup> But, despite this, the public generally tend to support policies that improve the environment. For instance, majorities of Britons support a new Clean Air Act to tackle air pollution, maintaining current levels of environmental protection post-Brexit, and banning microbeads in cosmetic products to reduce marine plastic pollution.<sup>2</sup>

This report uses ‘the environment’ as a broad term for the natural world. For the purposes of this report, it is divided in to two main parts: first, the ‘natural environment’, which refers to wildlife, waterways, forests, seas, air quality, and other natural features; second, ‘climate change’, which refers to changing weather patterns as a result of increased atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. There is a relationship between the two issues; for instance, the diversity of wildlife is threatened by climate change.<sup>3</sup> The challenges facing both parts of the environment are often a result of human activity and thus a focus of politicians and policymakers.

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1 YouGov, “YouGov tracker: most important issues”, [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/9pua170zyn/YG%20Trackers%20-%20Top%20Issues%20161129.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/9pua170zyn/YG%20Trackers%20-%20Top%20Issues%20161129.pdf) (2016).

2 Guardian Cities, “65% of British public support new Clean Air Act, says survey”, *The Guardian*, 14 February, 2017; Ian Johnston, “145 MPs pledge to make UK greenest country in world after Brexit”, *The Independent*, 8 December, 2016; Damian Carrington, “Two-thirds of British public polled by Greenpeace back microbead ban”, *The Guardian*, 13 April, 2016.

3 Michela Pacifici et al., “Species’ traits influenced their response to recent climate change”, *Nature Climate Change* 7 (2017), 205-9.

This report focuses on ‘conservatives’, who we think are most appropriately described for the purposes of this research as those who have voted ‘Conservative’. Conservatives are often portrayed as less supportive of environmental policies than the general public.<sup>4</sup> For instance, Conservatives are much more likely than other voters to support airport expansion, which would increase economic growth but damage the environment.<sup>5</sup> But previous polling also reveals that individual policies to improve the environment do consistently command support from Conservatives.<sup>6</sup>

Scepticism towards environmentalism is also prevalent among ‘conservative’ opinion formers. The UK’s high-profile climate sceptics are overwhelmingly conservatives. The arguments that are advanced against measures to tackle climate change are typically rooted in principles associated with conservatives, for example, an aversion to statist policies, such as increased taxation or more regulation, which confound individual freedom.<sup>7</sup> Some conservatives are also concerned about the strand of environmentalism that supports abandoning economic growth in order to protect the environment.<sup>8</sup>

Yet there is no reason why conservatism and concern for the environment should be inherently at odds. Conservatives believe in intergenerational fairness: the idea that each generation owes a responsibility to those that come after. Edmund Burke, an eighteenth century conservative philosopher, described society as “a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.”<sup>9</sup> Handing

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4 George Marshall, “How to build a conservative narrative on climate change and energy”, <http://green.brightblue.org.uk/blog/2016/6/2/how-to-build-a-conservative-narrative-on-climate-change-and-energy> (2016).

5 Ipsos Mori, “Ipsos Mori political tracker July 2015”, <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/political-monitor-july-2015-tables-airports.pdf> (2015).

6 YouGov, “Sunday Times survey results”, [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/gxvihxoixc/SundayTimesResults\\_150515\\_Website.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/gxvihxoixc/SundayTimesResults_150515_Website.pdf) (2015), 9.

7 Christopher Booker, “We’re following Germany down the primrose path of green energy madness”, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 30 October, 2016.

8 George Monbiot, “Consume more, conserve more: sorry, but we just cannot do both”, *The Guardian*, 24 November, 2015.

9 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the revolution in France* (New York: Dover Publications, 2006), 96.

on the environment to the next generation in a good condition realises Burke's partnership between generations.

Conservatives also believe people owe a responsibility to their local community. Sir Roger Scruton, a contemporary conservative philosopher, has argued that environmentalism properly belongs to the political right, rather than the left, and draws on the conservative principle of "oikophilia", or love of home: "For the desire to protect the environment arises spontaneously in people, just as soon as they recognise their accountability to others for what they are and do, and just as soon as they identify some place as "ours"."<sup>10</sup>

Conservatives generally ascribe to the view that markets are the most efficient mechanism for allocating resources in an economy. However, they also accept that markets can sometimes fail, for instance, when they produce significant external costs on society. These could include the additional healthcare costs of treating respiratory illnesses as a result of air pollution from transport and damage to property from flooding as a result of climate change from fossil fuel combustion. Instead, well-functioning markets should internalise these costs, by making those that harm the environment pay the social costs of their pollution.

In addition, Conservatives instinctively support many of the secondary benefits that result from protecting the environment. For example, the beauty of natural spaces like parks and forests, that are preserved and enhanced, has the potential to greatly improve people's quality of life. If homes and industry waste less energy and resources, this reduces the environmental impact of human activity, as well as saving money for households and businesses through greater efficiency. The imperative of overcoming environmental challenges creates new economic opportunities for businesses, from schemes to reuse waste products, to zero-emission transportation.

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<sup>10</sup> Roger Scruton, "Environmentalism starts with loving our own", [http://theconservative.online/article/environmentalism\\_starts\\_with\\_loving\\_our\\_own](http://theconservative.online/article/environmentalism_starts_with_loving_our_own) (2017); See also Roger Scruton, *Green philosophy: how to think seriously about the planet* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012).

When in power, conservative political leaders have applied these principles and prioritised environmental concerns. Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher became one of the first world leaders to deliver an international speech on climate change when she addressed the UN General Assembly in 1989: “But the problem of global climate change is one that affects us all and action will only be effective if it is taken at the international level. It is no good squabbling over who is responsible or who should pay.”<sup>11</sup> With this speech, she supported the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a UN body that gives advice on the science of climate change.<sup>12</sup>

The Clean Air Act of 1956, which introduced smoke control areas to tackle urban air pollution, was passed by a Conservative Government. Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath established the UK’s first Department for the Environment in 1970. The Conservative Government in the 1990s created a new national forest in the East Midlands.<sup>13</sup> David Cameron’s Conservative Government oversaw an increase in renewable energy’s share of Britain’s electricity generation mix from 7% in 2010 to 25% in 2015.<sup>14</sup>

The current Conservative Government has already enacted a number of major environmental policies.<sup>15</sup> Within days of taking office, Theresa May’s ministers passed the fifth carbon budget into law.<sup>16</sup> This was followed by a ban on the sale of ivory products made since 1947,<sup>17</sup> new

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11 Margaret Thatcher, *Speech to the United Nations General Assembly*, 8 November, 1989, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107817>.

12 Roger Harrabin, “Margaret Thatcher: How PM legitimised green concerns”, *BBC News*, 8 April, 2013.

13 Matt Browne, “The National Forest: green conservatism in action”, <http://green.brightblue.org.uk/blog/2016/4/15/the-national-forest-green-conservatism-in-action> (2016).

14 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, “Digest of UK energy statistics”, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/552059/Chapter\\_5\\_web.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/552059/Chapter_5_web.pdf) (2016), 121.

15 Sam Hall, “Green shoots are appearing for Theresa May’s new government”, *Reaction Life*, 7 October, 2016.

16 Adam Vaughan, “UK sets ambitious new 2030s carbon target”, *The Guardian*, 30 June, 2016.

17 Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, “UK ban on modern day ivory sales”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-ban-on-modern-day-ivory-sales> (2016).

regulations limiting the use of microbeads in cosmetic products,<sup>18</sup> an industrial strategy to support new low-carbon industries like battery storage,<sup>19</sup> a consultation on how to encourage a smart, flexible, low-carbon power system,<sup>20</sup> a consultation to close Britain's remaining coal-fired power stations,<sup>21</sup> and incentives to support ultra-low emission vehicles.<sup>22</sup>

But many environmental challenges remain, both in relation to the natural environment and climate change. First, if the Government is to meet its objective to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than it found it, it needs to reverse the current decline in wildlife. It has been found that there has been a 56% decline in species since 1970.<sup>23</sup> The UK routinely breaches the legal limits on air pollution, which is known to cause a range of negative health impacts, such as cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses, and is estimated to cause 40,000 premature deaths each year in the UK.<sup>24</sup> Brexit presents both challenges and opportunities for the natural environment, as the current set of environmental regulations originating from the EU are transposed in to UK law and cease to be enforced by the EU agencies.

Second, despite successfully meeting the targets to date, the Government must reduce carbon emissions further in order to meet

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18 Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, "Microbead ban announced to protect sealife", <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/microbead-ban-announced-to-protect-sealife> (2016).

19 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, "Building our industrial strategy", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/586626/building-our-industrial-strategy-green-paper.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/586626/building-our-industrial-strategy-green-paper.pdf) (2017).

20 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, "A smart, flexible energy system: a call for evidence", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/576367/Smart\\_Flexibility\\_Energy\\_-\\_Call\\_for\\_Evidence1.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576367/Smart_Flexibility_Energy_-_Call_for_Evidence1.pdf) (2016).

21 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, "Coal generation in Great Britain", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/577080/With\\_SIG\\_Unabated\\_coal\\_closure\\_consultation\\_FINAL\\_v6.1\\_.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/577080/With_SIG_Unabated_coal_closure_consultation_FINAL_v6.1_.pdf) (2016).

22 Sam Hall, "A turbo-charge statement for electric vehicles", <http://green.brightblue.org.uk/blog/2016/11/25/a-turbo-charge-statement-for-electric-vehicles> (2016).

23 RSPB, State of nature 2016, [https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/State%20of%20Nature%20UK%20report\\_%2020%20Sept\\_tcm9-424984.pdf](https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/State%20of%20Nature%20UK%20report_%2020%20Sept_tcm9-424984.pdf) (2016), 6.

24 Royal College of Physicians and Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, "Every breath we take: the lifelong impact of air pollution", <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/file/2916/download?token=5dnlDovZ> (2016), 4.

the goal enshrined in the 2008 Climate Change Act for emissions to fall by 80% by 2050 from a 1990 baseline. The Committee on Climate Change has found the government's current policies are insufficient to meet this target.<sup>25</sup> In particular, transport, the highest emitting sector of the economy, must decarbonise through greater uptake of public transport and electric vehicles; while emissions from heating should be reduced initially by increasing the energy efficiency of the building stock.<sup>26</sup>

The Government therefore requires new environmental policies, which enjoy support from their voters, especially Conservatives, in order to meet these and other environmental challenges. Bright Blue established the *Green conservatism* project to develop original, distinctive centre-right narratives and policies that cost-effectively protect the natural environment and tackle climate change. This research seeks to identify both the political opportunities for implementing popular centre-right policies that do this, as well as the political challenges where support for environmental action among conservatives is weak.

## Focus of the report

In this report, we identify the key views held by 'conservatives', who we think are most appropriately described for the purposes of this research as those who voted 'Conservative' in the 2015 General Election.

In the questions, we seek to explore further the nuance of conservative views on the environment, scratching beneath the surface of superficial scepticism. We seek to unearth any variance in views on the environment among different kinds of conservatives by analysing differing responses according to socio-demographic characteristics,

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25 Committee on Climate Change, "Meeting carbon budgets – 2016 progress report to Parliament", <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2016-CCC-Progress-Report.pdf> (2016), 11.

26 Sam Hall and Ben Caldecott, "Better homes: incentivising home energy improvements", <http://green.brightblue.org.uk/s/Better-Homes-incentivising-home-energy-improvements-FINAL-5mg8.pdf> (2016), 26.

such as age, socio-economic grade, and geography.

In this report, we conduct polling to explore Conservatives' general attitudes on the environment and examine Conservatives' views on the policies that Bright Blue has advocated this year as part of its *Green conservatism* project.

This report will seek to answer the following research questions:

1. How concerned are conservatives about the environment and to what extent do they view it as a political priority?
2. Which arguments and policies to protect the environment do conservatives support?
3. In which areas of environmental policy is the greatest scepticism found among conservatives?

This report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter Two** explains in detail the methodology employed for the public polling we conducted;
- **Chapter Three** explores the general attitudes of conservatives towards the environment. It studies their concern about climate change and the different narratives in favour of tackling it. It gauges their concern about the state of the natural environment and their preferences for different natural spaces;
- **Chapter Four** examines what conservatives think should happen post-Brexit to environmental regulations, which are currently decided at EU level. It studies in particular their views on the future of agricultural payments;
- **Chapter Five** analyses conservatives' preferences for the future of the power sector in Great Britain;
- **Chapter Six** tests what conservatives think about different home energy improvements and the barriers to installing them in their homes;

- **Chapter Seven** examines levels of concern among conservatives about air pollution in their local area and their support for various policy mechanisms to tackle the problem;
- **Chapter Eight** explores conservatives' views on the UK being a leader on climate change and their preferences for other areas of international environmental leadership;
- **Chapter Nine** concludes with the main themes of conservative thinking on the environment which have emerged from our polling.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

This report aims to discover the views of conservatives about the environment. This chapter describes in detail the polling methods we used to achieve this.

### Conservatives

We understand conservatives to mean those that voted Conservative at the 2015 General Election in the different countries of Great Britain, who are called ‘Conservatives’ in this report. The group of people who have conservative values or a centre-right political outlook may be broader than just those who have voted for the Conservative Party. Equally, it is possible for Conservative voters to hold positions which would not typically be regarded as ‘conservative’. But we are confident that the views of conservatives are best described through the views of ‘Conservatives’.

### Polling of Conservatives

The polling was undertaken by Populus in two phases. The first phase, conducted between 12 and 18 January 2017, consisted of 1,033 British adult respondents, who were surveyed online. Using the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, the sample is fully representative of the adult British population according to age, gender, socio-economic grade, and government region.

The second phase of polling was also conducted between 12 and 18 January 2017. This was a booster sample of 1,743 Conservatives,

added to the nationally representative poll, to bring the total number of Conservatives up to 2,022. They were also surveyed online.

The two phases of polling enabled us to analyse voters' views in two ways. First, we were able to compare the opinions of Conservatives with non-Conservatives (such as Labour, Liberal Democrat, and UKIP voters).

Second, by significantly increasing the number of Conservatives, the booster sample enabled us to analyse how Conservatives differ in their views on the environment. We were able to investigate how, among Conservatives, socio-demographic characteristics such as age, regional geography, and socio-economic grade, affected their beliefs about the environment. This variation between different groups of Conservatives will be discussed throughout the report.

In addition to these standard socio-demographic characteristics, we had two further cross breaks, which enable Conservatives' views to be analysed and broken down according to their response to a particular question. First, we asked respondents whether they voted to Remain in or Leave the European Union in the referendum held on 23rd June 2016. This cross break will indicate how voting Leave or Remain relates to Conservatives' views on the environment.

Second, we asked respondents to describe their views on climate change. They were given three options: "climate change is happening, and is mostly caused by human behaviour activities"; "climate change is happening, and is mostly caused by natural phenomena beyond human control"; and "climate change is not happening". This further cross break will enable us to see where a fundamental rejection of the science of climate change is linked to support for environmental policies. It will also suggest which environmental policies, perhaps because of other benefits, such as increased employment or improved public health and well-being, resonate with climate sceptics, even though they deny the underlying climate science.

The cross breaks that were used to differentiate between Conservatives

are detailed in full in Box 2.1.

**Box 2.1: Complete polling cross breaks**

- Age
- Gender
- Government office region
- Socio-economic grade
- Vote in the EU referendum
- View on climate change

In this report, we have not reported any data for which the sample size was under 50. In a small number of cases, we have reported data for which the sample size was greater than 50, but under 100. For this reason, polling data for the Liberal Democrats, Conservatives in Scotland, Conservatives in the North East, and Conservatives in Wales should be treated with caution, as the small sample size makes them relatively less reliable.

## Chapter 3: General attitudes to the environment

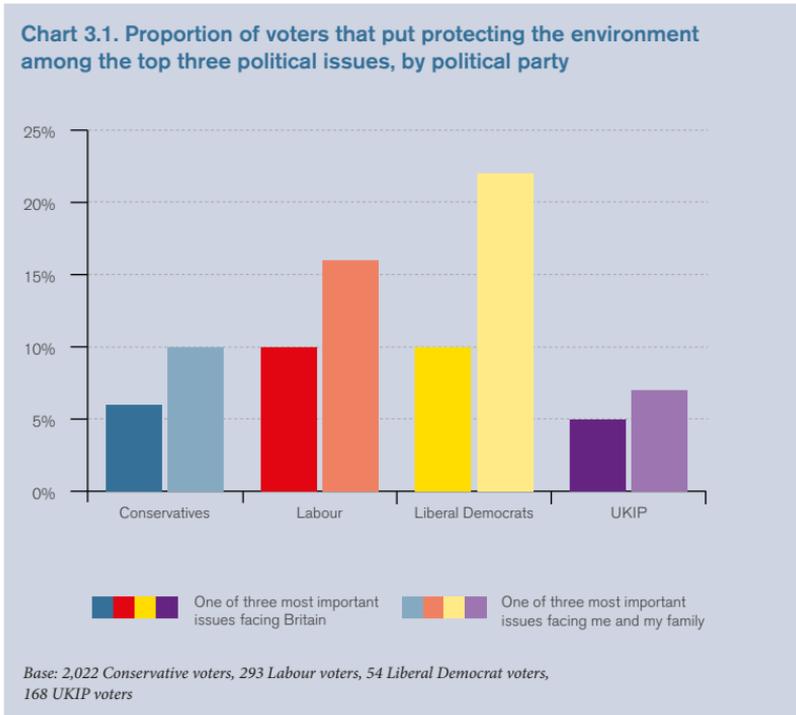
This chapter examines, first, whether Conservatives view the environment as a political priority. Second, which environmental issues Conservatives think the Government should prioritise. Third, how concerned Conservatives are about the impacts of climate change and which arguments for tackling climate change they most agree with. Fourth, how concerned Conservatives are about the state of the natural environment and which natural spaces Conservatives want to see government give priority to.

### Priority of the environment

Few Conservatives see the environment as a major political priority. As Chart 3.1 shows, just 6% of Conservatives rank protecting the environment as one of the three most important issues facing Britain. Slightly more Conservatives (10%) selected it as one of the three most important issues facing them and their family. It is interesting that the environment becomes more of a priority when people think of it as affecting them personally rather than as the nation as a whole.

This differs from voters of other parties in two ways. First, Conservative voters see environmental protections as more important than UKIP voters, just 5% of whom see it as one of the top three issues facing the whole country and 7% of whom see it as a top three issue facing them and their families. Second, Conservatives see the environment as less of a priority than voters from parties to the left:

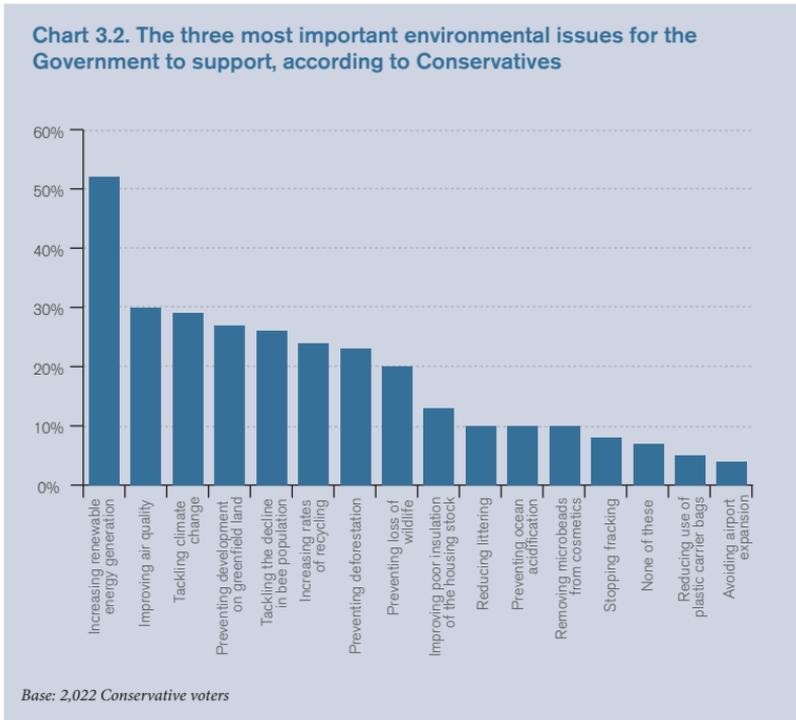
10% of both Liberal Democrat and Labour voters ranked protecting the environment among the top three issues facing Britain; 22% of Liberal Democrats and 16% of Labour voters thought it was in the top three issues facing them and their families.



## Priority of different environmental issues

By a significant margin, Conservatives view increasing renewable energy generation as the most important environmental issue for government to support, with 52% putting the issue in their top three (see Chart 3.2). This is followed by improving air quality, which 30% of Conservatives place among their three most pressing issues. Thirdly, 29% of Conservatives put tackling climate change in their top three environmental issues. Therefore, two of the three most popular environmental issues among Conservatives were directly climate

change-related. Fourth, many Conservatives think the government should stop developments on greenfield land, with 27% naming it one of their three priority issues. Fifth, 26% of Conservatives put tackling the decline in bee population in their top three environmental issues.



The environmental issues that feature the least among Conservatives' top three are: avoiding airport expansion, reducing the use of carrier bags, and stopping fracking, as shown in Chart 3.2. The decision to build a third runway at Heathrow has been very controversial among local residents;<sup>27</sup> however, it appears that the concern is not reflected nationally, with just 4% of Conservatives giving it top three priority. Plastic bag use has fallen by 83% since the introduction of the carrier

<sup>27</sup> Francesca Gillett, "Heathrow third runway: 15 people charged after airport expansion protest which blocked M4 junction", *Evening Standard*, 20 November, 2016.

bag charge in 2015;<sup>28</sup> the policy's success may explain the low concern levels among Conservatives about the issue, as only 5% selected it as one of their three most important issues. Finally, the Government's championing of fracking has caused some localised protests. But halting the development of new shale gas extraction sites is not a national environmental priority for more than 8% Conservatives.

There were some interesting variations between different types of Conservatives over what they thought was the most important environmental issue. For instance, younger Conservatives are much less likely to name preventing development on greenfield land as a priority compared to older Conservatives. It is in the top three most important issues for 6% of 18-24 year olds relative to 31% of Conservatives aged 65 and over. Conservative attitudes to greenfield development are also affected by how they voted in the EU referendum: 33% of Conservatives that voted Leave put it in their top three environmental issues, whereas only 21% of Conservative Remain voters do. The Government's recent white paper on housing confirmed the prohibition of developing on Green Belt land.<sup>29</sup>

Improving air quality is a particularly common option for Conservatives living in London, where 44% select the issue among their top three, compared to 30% of Conservatives nationally. Air pollution is known to be particularly acute in London, where breaches in legal air pollution limits are more frequent and around 9,500 premature deaths each year are linked to poor air quality.<sup>30</sup>

## Belief in and concern about climate change

This section focuses on one of the major aspects of environmental

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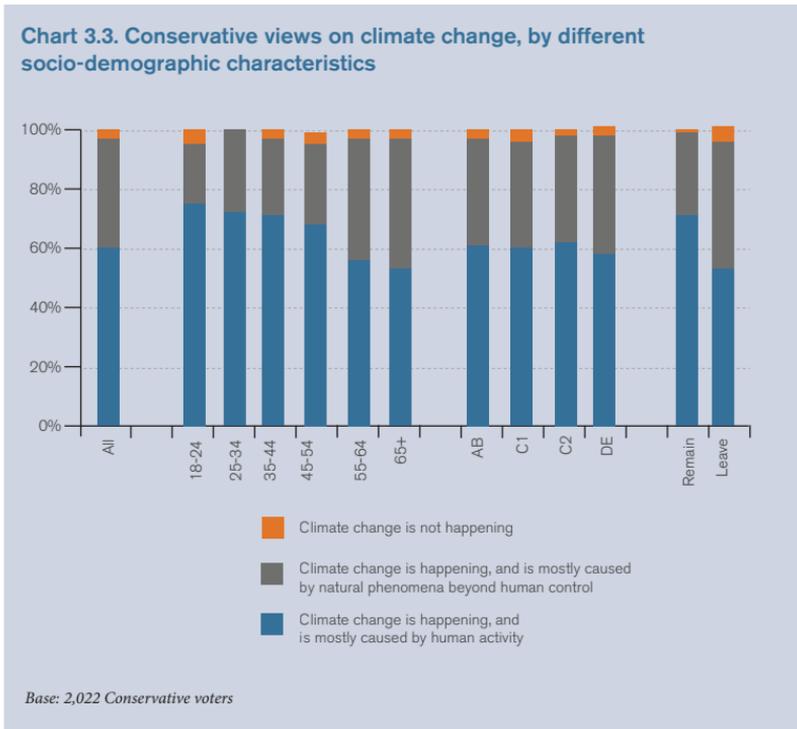
28 Rebecca Morrelle, "Plastic bag use plummets in England since 5p charge", *BBC News*, 30 July, 2016.

29 Department for Communities and Local Government, "Fixing our broken housing market", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/590464/Fixing\\_our\\_broken\\_housing\\_market\\_-\\_print\\_ready\\_version.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590464/Fixing_our_broken_housing_market_-_print_ready_version.pdf) (2017), 28.

30 Heather Walton et al., "Understanding the health impacts of air pollution in London", <https://www.scribd.com/document/271641490/King-s-College-London-report-on-mortality-burden-of-NO2-and-PM2-5-in-London> (2015).

policy: climate change. Most Conservatives are not ‘climate sceptics’: people who question the scientific consensus that the climate is changing because of increased concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. As shown in Chart 3.3, a clear majority of Conservatives (60%) accept manmade climate change. A sizeable number (37%) attribute climate change to natural phenomena over which humans have no control, with just 3% denying that the climate is changing.

Accepting manmade climate change is the majority view of Conservatives of each age category and each socio-economic grade. It is also the majority view (53%) of those who voted to leave the European Union. However, Conservatives that are younger, have a higher socio-economic grade, and voted Remain in the EU referendum are more likely to agree that manmade climate change is happening. For instance, 75% of 18-24 year old Conservatives accept manmade climate change, compared to 53% of Conservatives aged 65 and over.



There are two main differences with Conservatives and those who voted for other parties. First, Conservatives are more likely to accept manmade climate change than UKIP voters, with 51% of UKIP respondents accepting manmade climate change compared to 60% of Conservatives. It is worth noting, however, that half of UKIP voters do support this position. Second, Conservatives are generally more sceptical of climate change than voters of other main parties. Acceptance of manmade climate change is higher among Labour voters (73%), and Liberal Democrats (76%).

As well as accepting the science behind climate change, most Conservatives are concerned about the impacts of climate change. The main risks of climate change in the UK, as identified by the Committee

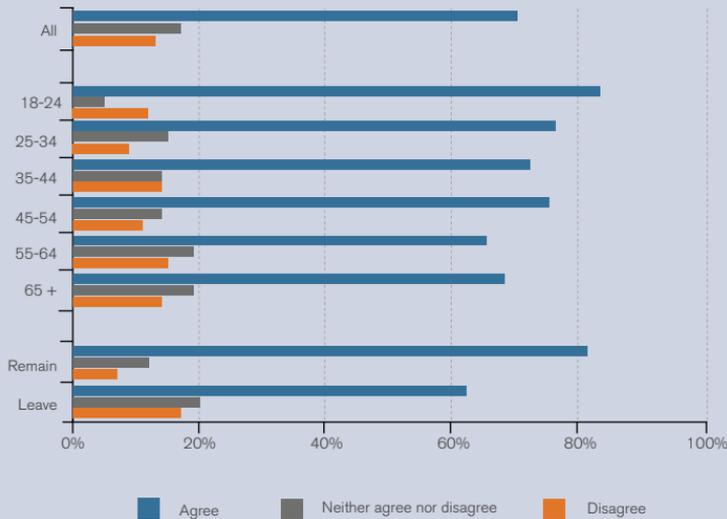
on Climate Change, are: increased flood risk and coastal damage; harms to public health and productivity from rising temperatures; potential water shortages; damage to natural capital; and harm to domestic food production.<sup>31</sup>

Seventy percent in total either agree or strongly agree, which we will report together for all relevant questions in this report as net agreement, that they are concerned about the impacts of climate change, with just 13% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, which we will report together as net disagreement throughout the report for all relevant questions. Concern levels are particularly high among younger Conservatives, as shown in Chart 3.4. In the youngest category (18-24), 83% agree that they are worried, whereas among 55-64 year-old Conservatives the proportion which is in agreement is 65%. A higher proportion of Conservative Remain voters (81%) is concerned about the impacts of climate change than Conservative Leave voters (62%).

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31 Committee on Climate Change, "UK climate change risk assessment 2017: synthesis report", <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/UK-CCRA-2017-Synthesis-Report-Committee-on-Climate-Change.pdf> (2016), 2.

**Chart 3.4. The proportion of Conservatives that are concerned about the impacts of climate change, by age and EU referendum vote**



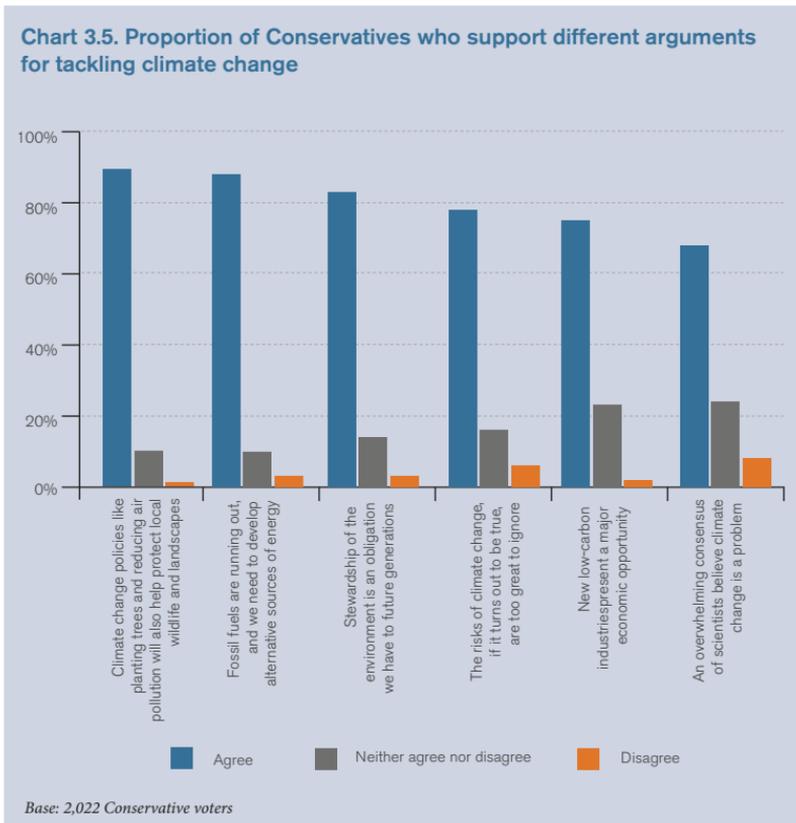
Base: 2,022 Conservative voters

Among Conservatives that accept manmade climate change there is a strong appetite for the Government to increase its ambition to address the problem. Fifty-five percent of this particular group agree that current government policies have been insufficiently ambitious, with only 9% disagreeing with the statement. This is a significant finding in the context of the shortfall, which was discussed in Chapter One, between the legally-binding targets and the emissions reduction that current policies will deliver. The Government is expected to release shortly an Emissions Reduction Plan, which will set out the policies up to the early 2030s to meet the UK's legally binding targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

## Arguments for taking action on climate change

We tested whether Conservatives agreed with a range of statements, each

of which expressed a different argument for why the UK should seek to tackle climate change. Chart 3.5 shows that the most popular argument for tackling climate change, with which 89% of Conservatives agreed, is: “Climate change policies like planting trees and reducing air pollution will also help protect local wildlife and landscapes”. The second most popular narrative, with which 88% of Conservatives agree, for taking action on climate change is that “fossil fuels are running out, and we need to develop alternative sources of energy”. These results suggest that framing climate policies in terms of their secondary benefits, in particular those related to the natural environment, is persuasive for Conservatives.



Third, as shown in Chart 3.5, 83% of Conservatives agree that “stewardship of the environment is an obligation we have to future generations”. Margaret Thatcher articulated this principle in her speech to the 1988 Conservative Party Conference in support of action on climate change: “No generation has a freehold on this earth. All we have is a life tenancy—with a full repairing lease.”<sup>32</sup> Therefore, framing climate change in terms of the conservative principle of intergenerational responsibility, not just the co-benefits that derive from action, is popular among Conservatives. In fact, it is particularly popular among older Conservatives, with 85% of those over 55 agreeing.

Fourth, 78% of Conservatives overall agree with the statement that “the risks of climate change, if it turns out to be true, are too great to ignore”. This argument appeals to Conservatives who may be undecided or not expert in the science of climate change, and relies on the large-scale environmental, social, and economic risks associated with climate change. It is very compelling for Conservatives that accept manmade climate change, with 93% agreeing. But only 58% of Conservatives that believe climate change is naturally occurring and 23% of those that deny climate change is happening agree with the statement.

Fifth, while a very strong majority of Conservatives (75%) agree that there are economic opportunities arising from tackling climate change, it is the second-least popular narrative that we tested. This is striking as it is one of the most frequent arguments deployed by conservative decision-makers and opinion formers in favour of tackling climate change.<sup>33</sup> There are some significant regional disparities among Conservatives revealed in response to this statement. Conservatives in the North West (81%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (78%) agree the most with this narrative, while there are significantly fewer Conservatives in Wales (63%) and the North East (65%) in agreement.

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32 Margaret Thatcher, Speech to the Conservative Party Conference, 14 October, 1988, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107352>.

33 For instance, James Heappey, “Do not cheer Trump’s scepticism about the Paris deal. Green energy is good for business – and for you”, *ConservativeHome*, 25 November, 2016.

This might reflect the strong presence of low-carbon business in the first two regions, such as the Siemens wind turbine blade factory in Hull or the Sellafield and Moorside nuclear projects in Cumbria. Conversely, the second two regions are known for their heritage of high-carbon industries, in particular coal mining.

Finally, the claim that “an overwhelming consensus of scientists believe climate change is a problem” is the least popular narrative for tackling climate change among Conservatives, with 68% agreeing. This argument is an appeal to trust scientific expertise. One of the starkest disparities was the response of Conservatives who voted Remain in the EU referendum and those who voted Leave. Eighty percent of Remain Conservatives agree with the statement, which is just 60% among Leave Conservatives.

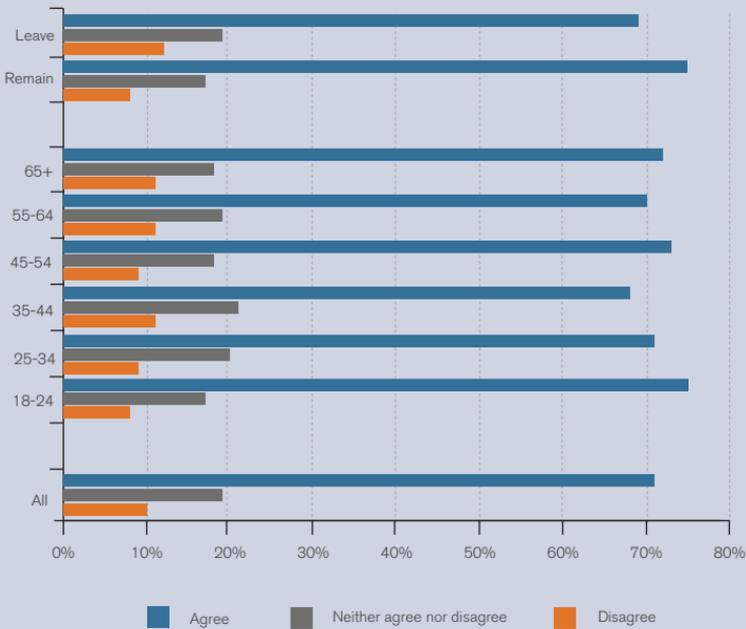
### Concern for the natural environment

This section focuses on the second of the two major aspects of environmental policy: the natural environment. A large majority of Conservatives (71%) are concerned about the state of the natural environment, such as wildlife, landscapes, waterways, and forests. This is broadly in line with the levels of concern among Conservatives about the impacts of climate change. However, unlike the concern over the impacts of climate change (as shown in Chart 3.4 earlier), concern for the state of the UK’s natural environment is broadly consistent across the different age categories of Conservatives. As Chart 3.6 shows below, 72% of Conservatives who are aged 65 or above are concerned about the natural environment, as are 75% of Conservatives aged between 18 and 24. This shows that the natural environment is an issue that appeals equally to Conservatives of all ages, whereas climate change has disproportionately high traction among younger Conservatives.

There is also much less variance among Conservatives’ attitudes to the natural environment depending on how they voted in the EU referendum, compared to their attitudes to climate change (see Chart

3.4 earlier). Whereas a higher proportion of Remain Conservatives (81%) are concerned about the impacts of climate change than Leave Conservatives (62%), 75% of Remain Conservatives are concerned about the state of the UK’s natural environment compared to 69% of Leave Conservatives (see Chart 3.6).

**Chart 3.6. The proportion of Conservatives that are concerned by the state of the UK’s natural environment, by age and EU referendum vote**



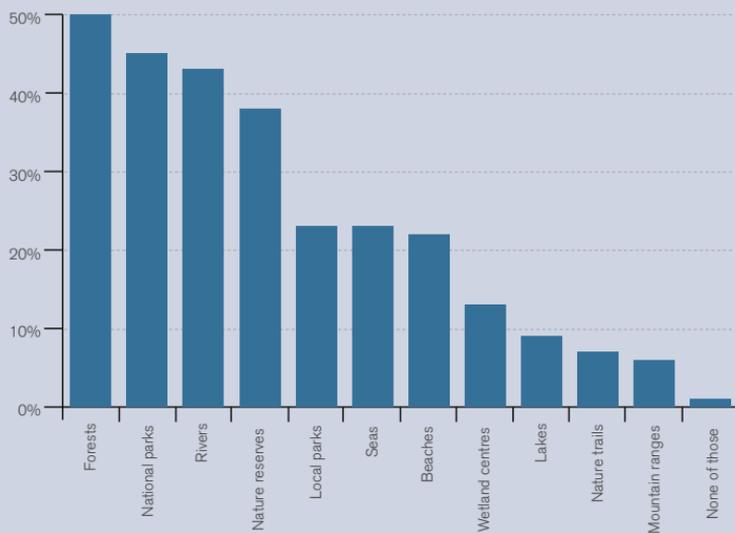
Base: 2,022 Conservative voters

## Natural spaces

Chart 3.7 illustrates that half of Conservatives want to see the government give priority to forests when allocating new environment funding and planning protections, making it the most popular natural space respondents were asked about. The Government has a manifesto

commitment to plant 11 million new trees over the course of this parliament, which some conservationist groups believe will not be met with current planting rates.<sup>34</sup> The UK's forest cover is already very low, with just 13% of land used for forestry, which compares very unfavourably to the EU average of 37%.<sup>35</sup>

**Chart 3.7. Proportion of Conservatives that want government to give different natural spaces priority in terms of funding and planning protections**



Base: 2,022 Conservative voters

National parks are the second most popular natural space for Conservatives, with 45% selecting this option. Since 2010, the Government has designated more land for National Parks and Ministers

34 John Vidal, "England may be in deforestation state due to lack of tree planting", *The Guardian*, 6 December, 2016.

35 Woodland Trust, "The state of the UK's forests, woods, and trees", <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/mediafile/100229275/stake-of-uk-forest-report.pdf?cb=58d97f320c> (2011), 11.

protected their funding in the 2015 Spending Review.<sup>36</sup> Third, 43% of Conservatives say they want rivers to be given priority. The EU's Water Framework Directive is currently driving UK government policy to reduce water pollution in rivers from sources, such as building sites, quarries, and agriculture.<sup>37</sup> Future water quality regulation post-Brexit will have to be considered in the forthcoming Great Repeal Bill.

Fourth, 38% of Conservatives think government should give funding and planning priority to nature reserves. There are currently 224 national nature reserves in England, covering 0.7% of England's land area.<sup>38</sup>

Nature trails are one of the least popular natural spaces with Conservatives, as just 7% selected the option. This does not have positive implications for the Government's England Coast Path, which is in effect a 2,700-mile nature trail right around the coast of England, which will be completed by 2020.<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that most Conservatives do not generally see the environment as a political priority. Liberal Democrat and Labour voters, however, are more likely to see it as one of the most important political issues. When deciding priorities within environmental policy, Conservatives above all want to see action on increasing renewable energy generation, improving air quality, and tackling climate change.

Most Conservatives agree that manmade climate change is happening and are concerned about its impacts, although agreement is more likely among younger Conservatives and those that voted Remain.

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36 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, "8-point plan for England's National Parks", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/509916/national-parks-8-point-plan-for-england-2016-to-2020.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509916/national-parks-8-point-plan-for-england-2016-to-2020.pdf) (2016).

37 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, "2010 to 2015 government policy: water quality", <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-water-quality/2010-to-2015-government-policy-water-quality> (2015).

38 Natural England, "National nature reserves in England", <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-nature-reserves-in-england#history> (2015).

39 Natural England, "Natural England launches south east's first section of England Coast Path", <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/natural-england-launches-south-east-s-first-section-of-england-coast-path> (2016).

When talking about climate change, Conservatives most agree with arguments about the secondary benefits of climate policies, such as improvements to the natural environment or better energy security. Appeals to authority by pointing out the scientific consensus on climate change are less popular among Conservatives.

Most Conservatives are concerned about the state of the natural environment, to roughly the same degree as they are concerned about the impacts of climate change. When government allots funding and planning protections to natural spaces, Conservatives want to see forests and national parks prioritised.

## Chapter 4: The future of the environment after Brexit

In this chapter, we examine what Conservatives want to happen to current EU environmental regulations after the UK leaves the EU. We will then examine what Conservatives think about the future of agricultural payments, which are currently from the EU.

We have focused on this theme because, following the vote to leave the EU, a significant number of environmental policies, which currently stem from EU law, will instead have their basis only in domestic law. In the short term, the Government has said it will introduce a Great Repeal Bill to transpose all current EU regulations into UK law.<sup>40</sup> However, the long-term future of current regulations on the environment is an issue that will need to be addressed by policymakers and public attitudes can and should inform decision-making.

### The future of current EU environmental regulations

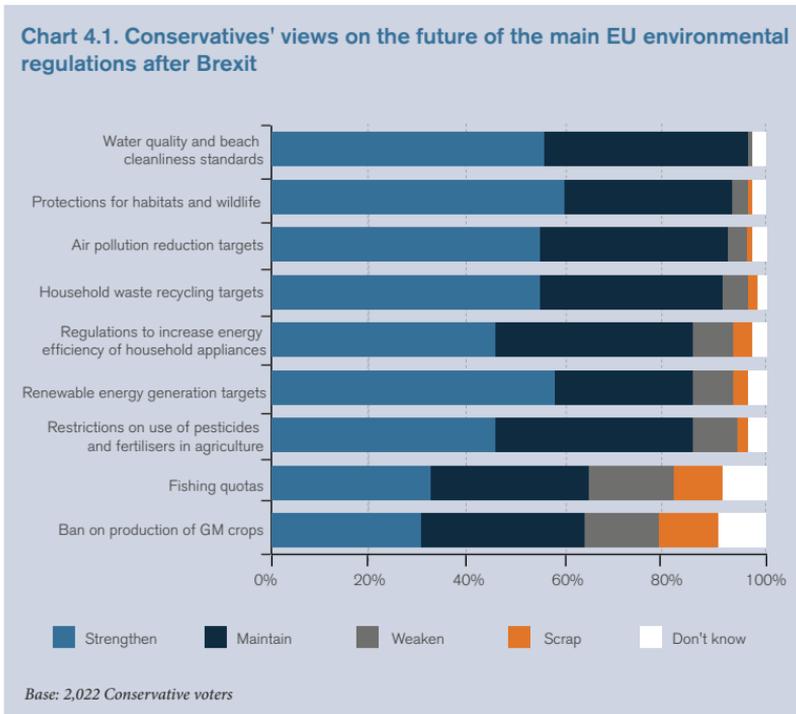
Conservatives want to see different environmental regulations set by the EU at least maintained and, in many cases strengthened, following Brexit. As Chart 4.1 shows, for every main EU regulation tested, large majorities of Conservatives are in favour of either maintaining or strengthening existing EU regulations. The three most popular EU regulations among Conservatives, which have the highest combined

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<sup>40</sup> Department for Exiting the EU, "Government announces end of European Communities Act", <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-end-of-european-communities-act> (2016).

score for strengthen and maintain, are: water quality and beach cleanliness standards (96%), protections for habitats and wildlife (93%), and air pollution reduction targets (92%).

Chart 4.1 demonstrates that there are majorities among Conservatives for strengthening five current EU regulations: protections for habitats and wildlife (59%), renewable energy generation targets (57%), water quality and beach cleanliness standards (55%), air pollution reduction targets (54%), and household waste recycling targets (54%).



The regulations for which there is the most support among Conservatives for weakening or scrapping are the ban on producing GM crops (27% would weaken or scrap) and fishing quotas (27% would weaken or scrap). But it is still important to note that a majority of Conservatives want to maintain or strengthen them.

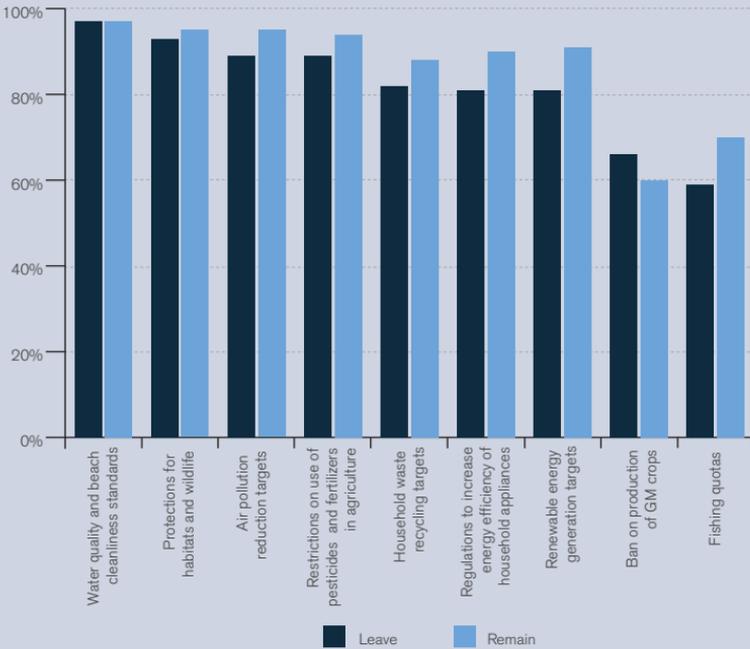
There is not a huge divergence of opinion on EU environmental regulations between Conservatives who voted Leave and those who voted Remain in the EU referendum, as shown by Chart 4.2 below. A majority of Leave and Remain Conservatives want to maintain or strengthen the main existing EU environmental regulations. Even for EU regulations that receive frequent criticism, such as the regulations to increase the energy efficiency of household appliances<sup>41</sup> and renewable energy generation targets, there is very strong support among Conservative Leave voters, with 81% wanting to maintain or strengthen both these existing regulations.<sup>42</sup>

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41 The EU sets mandatory minimum energy efficiency performance standards for many household items such as toasters or washing machines, which save energy and reduce carbon emissions.

42 Robert Fisk, “Crumbs! EU to launch kettle and toaster crackdown after referendum”, *The Sun*, 11 May, 2016; James Tapsfield, “EU renewable energy targets mean Britain spends hundreds of millions of pounds on wood pellets from US that do more damage to environment, study warns”, *Daily Mail*, 23 February, 2017.

**Chart 4.2. The proportion of Conservative who either want to strengthen or maintain the main EU environmental regulations after Brexit, by EU referendum vote**



Base: 1,992 Conservative voters

The most significant difference is over fishing quotas. Whereas 70% of Conservative Remainders support maintaining or strengthening the existing quota system, only 59% of Conservative Leavers would keep at least the current level of regulation. This may be because EU regulations are commonly blamed for reducing the number of British fishermen and the profitability of the industry.<sup>43</sup> The Government has said that it will be leaving the Common Fisheries Policy, under which the EU manages European fishing stocks as a common resource, but has not yet given an

43 Dean Kirby, "What would Brexit mean for the UK's fishing industry?," *The i*, 16 June, 2016.

indication of what its domestic fishing policy will be.<sup>44</sup>

## A new British agricultural policy?

Through the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, UK farmers receive payments to support food production and to undertake schemes that improve the environment. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs estimates this funding provides 55% of farmers' income.<sup>45</sup> The Government has announced it will guarantee the current scheme of payments until 2020, but has yet to indicate its plans beyond that.<sup>46</sup>

Conservatives want to see agricultural payments continue after Brexit. Our polling revealed that 61% of Conservatives support continuing payments to farmers, 19% do not support, and 21% of Conservatives do not know. Even among Conservative Leave voters, there is still a clear majority for maintaining payments to farmers, with 59% of respondents in support.

When those in favour or agnostic about continuing agricultural payments to farmers were asked to decide between targeting payments on increasing food production, improving the environment (through schemes such as tree planting or natural flood management), and supporting low-income farmers, Conservatives are split equally between food production and environmental protection, with 41% of respondents choosing each option (see Chart 4.3).

There are some interesting disparities between different types of Conservatives in responses to this question, as shown in Chart 4.3. For instance, Conservative men favour payments supporting food production, with 46% choosing this purpose for subsidies, compared to 37% of Conservative women. But payments for improving the

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44 House of Commons Hansard, "Leaving the EU: rural economy", <https://goo.gl/B46G5O> (2017), 876.

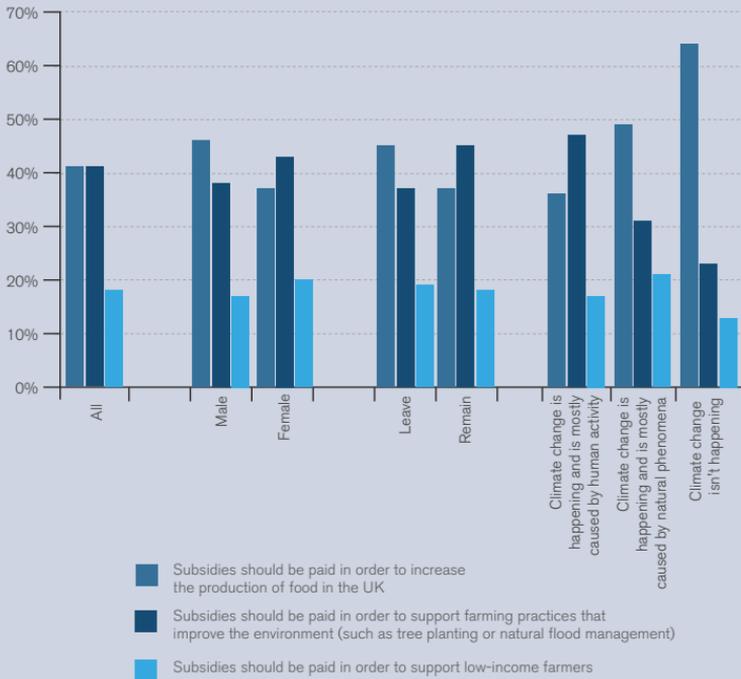
45 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, "Total income from farming in the United Kingdom", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/575418/agriaccounts-tiffstatsnotice-1dec16b.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575418/agriaccounts-tiffstatsnotice-1dec16b.pdf) (2016).

46 HM Treasury, "Chancellor Philip Hammond guarantees EU funding beyond date UK leaves the EU", <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-philip-hammond-guarantees-eu-funding-beyond-date-uk-leaves-the-eu> (2016).

environment is the most popular option among Conservative women, of whom 43% think this should be the main focus, compared to 38% of Conservative men. Forty-five percent of Conservative Leave voters back food production and 37% choose improving the environment. But for Conservative Remain voters, 45% choose improving the environment and 37% choose increasing food production.

Chart 4.3 also shows how Conservatives that accept manmade climate change, which were identified in question four of our polling as listed in the annex, are far more supportive of paying farmers for environmental protection, with 47% choosing that as the priority for agricultural payments post-Brexit, relative to Conservatives that do not accept the scientific consensus.

**Chart 4.3. Conservatives' priorities for agricultural payments after Brexit, by different socio-demographic characteristics**



Base: 1,646 Conservative voters

Conservative opinion on the future of agricultural payments is different from what other parties' voters think. More Labour and Liberal Democrat voters (50%) support prioritising payment for farming that improves the environment, while fewer Labour voters (29%) and Liberal Democrats (34%) want payments to support increased food production. Conversely, a lower proportion of UKIP voters (32%) than Conservatives support payments that improve the environment, while more UKIP voters (40%) want future payments to increase food production.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there is a strong opposition from Conservatives to any weakening of the main environmental regulations derived from EU law post-Brexit. In fact, in many areas, such as water quality, air pollution, habitats and wildlife, renewable energy generation, and household waste recycling, a majority of Conservatives want current environmental regulations to be strengthened.

Most Conservatives also support maintaining payments to farmers after we leave the EU in some form. Unlike voters for centre-left parties for whom the most popular priority for payments is environmental protection, Conservatives are evenly split between wanting payments to back food production and environmental protection.

## Chapter 5: The British power sector

This chapter examines Conservatives' preferred type of energy source for electricity generation. It will also specifically test Conservatives' views on the further development of onshore wind farms and the government's policy to phase out all Britain's remaining coal-fired power stations by the mid-2020s.

The future of Britain's energy supply is particularly topical this year, with the government announcing new financial support for low-carbon power in this parliament and consulting on its proposals to phase out the remaining coal-fired power stations.<sup>47</sup> In our first year of the *Green conservatism* project, Bright Blue has published, *Keeping the lights on: security of supply after coal*, which analyses the implications of phasing out coal on Britain's security of supply, after our recommendation to do so by the mid-2020s.<sup>48</sup>

### Energy sources for electricity generation

Conservatives have a more positive view of renewable power than of nuclear and fossil fuels. The five most positively viewed energy sources by Conservatives are all renewable and low-carbon. When asked to score how favourably they view certain energy sources (from zero as

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47 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, "Government sets out plans to upgrade UK energy infrastructure and increase clean energy investment", <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-sets-out-plans-to-upgrade-uk-energy-infrastructure-and-increase-clean-energy-investment> (2016).

48 Ben Caldecott, "*Keeping the lights on: security of supply after coal*", <http://green.brightblue.org.uk/s/Keeping-the-lights-on.pdf> (2016).

the least favourable and ten as the most), Conservatives give the highest average rating to solar power, with a mean score of 7.7 (see Chart 5.1). This is followed by tidal and offshore wind, which have mean scores of 7.6 and 7.2 respectively. Fourth, biomass has a 6.4 mean rating. Fifth, onshore wind's score is 6.2. Gas is in sixth place with 6.1. Nuclear is in second-last position with an average score of 6.1. The least popular form of energy generation is coal, which Conservatives gave a 4.3 rating on average.

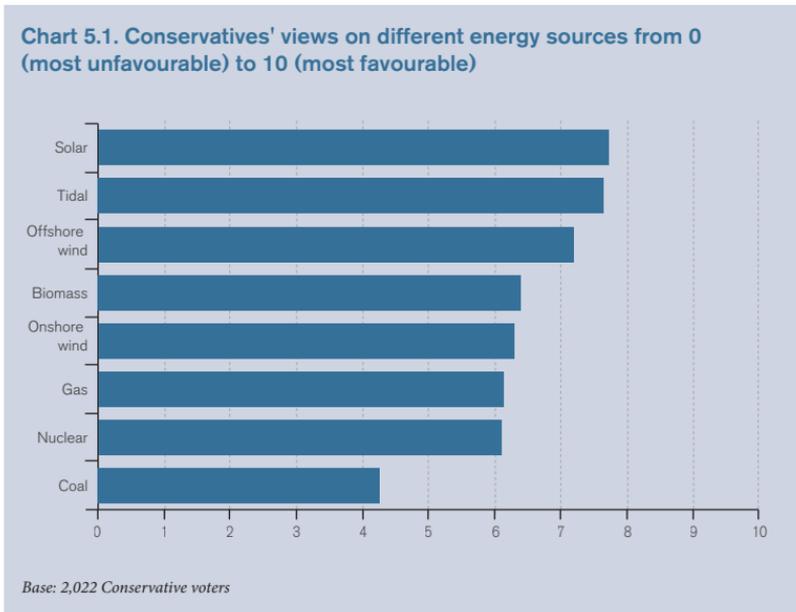
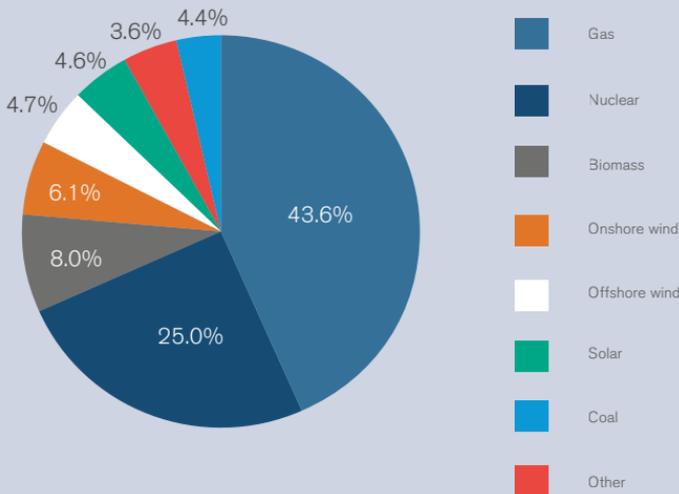


Chart 5.2 below shows the share of electricity generation by energy source in the third quarter of 2016, the most recent data available.<sup>49</sup> Gas is by far the largest energy source, providing 44% of the total electricity generated. Renewables and nuclear each produce approximately a quarter. Electricity from coal, by contrast, provided just 4% of the

<sup>49</sup> Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, "Energy trends December 2016", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/579542/ET\\_Dec\\_16.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/579542/ET_Dec_16.pdf) (2016), 48.

total. The current Government has signalled it wants to encourage more offshore wind, nuclear, and gas.<sup>50</sup> The unpopularity of coal among Conservatives is reflected in its currently low share of the grid. However, the two most popular energy sources among Conservatives, solar and tidal, are not currently among the Government's priorities and do not currently provide a large proportion of Britain's electricity supply.

**Chart 5.2. The share of electricity generation by different energy source for the third quarter of 2016**



Source: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2016)

There are not major differences between Conservatives according to different socio-demographic characteristics in their preferences for different energy sources, except for between Conservatives in different regions. For instance, tidal energy is significantly more popular in

<sup>50</sup> Amber Rudd, Speech on a new direction for UK energy policy, 18 November 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/amber-rudd-speech-on-a-new-direction-for-uk-energy-policy>.

Wales than elsewhere: compared to a mean score of 7.6 among all Conservative respondents, tidal earned a mean score of 8.1 in Wales, where tidal lagoon developers are hoping to build the first major projects.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, offshore wind is much more popular among Conservatives in the North West (7.6) and the East Midlands (7.6), than it is nationally among Conservatives (7.2). Both these regions host offshore wind developments.<sup>52</sup> Coal enjoys its highest support levels in the North East, with a mean score of 5.0, a region with which the coal mining industrial has historically been associated. These findings show the impact of regional economic interest and direct experience to how Conservatives view particular energy forms.

## Future onshore wind developments

The Conservative Government was elected in 2015 with a manifesto promise to “halt the spread of subsidised onshore wind farms”.<sup>53</sup> After winning the General Election, the Government swiftly closed the Renewable Obligation a year earlier than planned for onshore wind<sup>54</sup> and issued new planning guidance giving local planning authorities the final say over new onshore wind projects in their areas.<sup>55</sup>

We tested Conservative views on allowing further development of onshore wind farms. As Chart 5.3 illustrates, the most popular response is “Yes”, without any conditions, which 41% of Conservatives choose. Second, 23% of Conservatives respond “No”. Third, 18% select

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51 Adam Vaughan, “Swansea Bay tidal lagoon backed by government review”, *The Guardian*, 12 January, 2017.

52 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, “Digest of UK energy statistics: chapter five electricity”, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/552059/Chapter\\_5\\_web.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/552059/Chapter_5_web.pdf) (2016), 146-9.

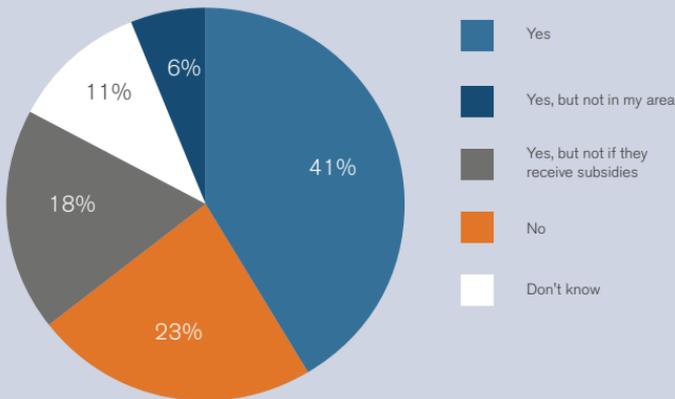
53 Conservatives, “The Conservative Party manifesto 2015”, <https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Blog/ConservativeManifesto2015.pdf> (2015), 57.

54 Department of Energy and Climate Change, “Changes to onshore wind subsidies protect investment and get the best deal for bill payers”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/changes-to-onshore-wind-subsidies-protect-investment-and-get-the-best-deal-for-bill-payers> (2015).

55 Department for Communities and Local Government, “Giving local people the final say over onshore wind farms”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/giving-local-people-the-final-say-over-onshore-wind-farms> (2015).

“Yes, but not if they receive subsidies”. Fourth, 11% do not know. Finally, 6% of Conservatives say “Yes, but not in my area”. Therefore, a clear majority of Conservatives (65%) support further development of onshore wind, provided certain conditions are met related to subsidies and a local veto.

**Chart 5.3. Conservative support for further development of onshore wind farms**



Base: 2,022 Conservative voters

In this parliament, the Government will hold three auctions for new Contracts for Difference (CfDs), which are fixed-price contracts for new low-carbon power generation, for offshore wind.<sup>56</sup> But there will be no auctions for mature technologies like onshore wind and solar. Bright Blue has advocated a different approach, that would both enable onshore wind farms to be developed and take account of concerns about subsidy. A fixed-price contract is required in order for all capital-

<sup>56</sup> Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, “Government sets out plans to upgrade UK energy infrastructure and increase clean energy investment”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-sets-out-plans-to-upgrade-uk-energy-infrastructure-and-increase-clean-energy-investment> (2016).

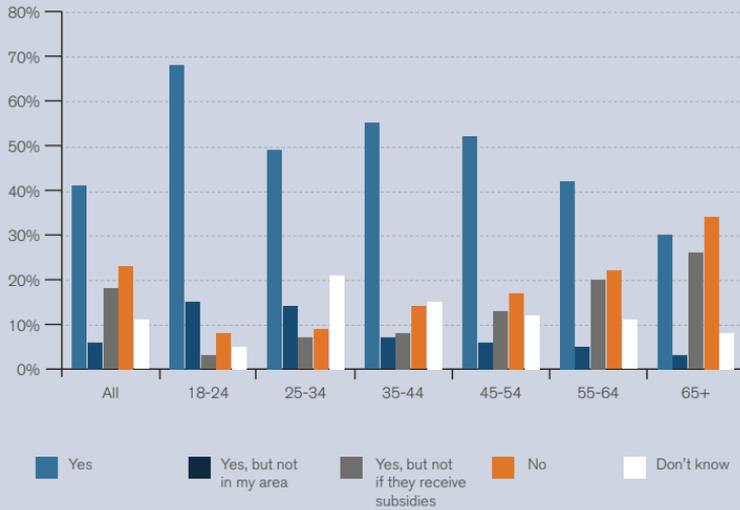
intensive new energy infrastructure to secure affordable financing for the investment. Therefore, all low-carbon technologies should be able to compete for CfDs, but mature technologies like onshore wind and solar should not receive subsidy.<sup>57</sup> To see whether the subsidy line has been crossed, Government should compare total life-time costs of the CfD with equivalent generation costs for other energy sources. Our polling shows a majority of Conservatives (59%) would support this approach, as shown in Chart 5.3.

As Chart 5.4 indicates, support for onshore wind differs significantly among Conservatives depending on their age category. Young Conservatives are more likely to support further onshore wind farms than older Conservatives. Among Conservatives aged between 18 and 24, there is clear majority support (68%) for onshore wind without any conditions around subsidy or location. But for Conservatives aged 65 and above, only 30% support onshore wind without any conditions; indeed, “no” becomes the most popular answer, with 34% of respondents. However, it is worth emphasising that a majority of Conservatives of all ages support further onshore wind under certain conditions.

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57 Ben Caldecott, “Green and responsible conservatism: embedding sustainability and long-termism within the UK economy”, <http://www.brightblue.org.uk/images/greenandresponsible.pdf> (2015), 37-38.

**Chart 5.4. Conservative support for further development of onshore wind farms, by age**



Base: 2,022 Conservative voters

## The phase-out of Britain's coal-fired power stations

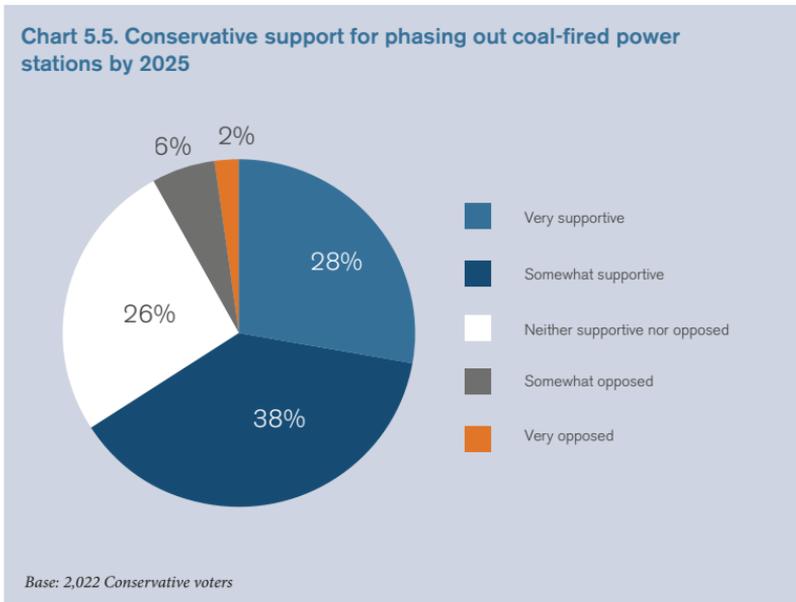
In 2015, Bright Blue called for the phasing out of coal-fired power stations, as one of the most effective, cost-efficient ways to reducing the UK's greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>58</sup> Later that year, the Government adopted this policy, announcing that by 2025 Britain would close its remaining unabated coal-fired power stations, provided enough new gas capacity comes forward to replace any gaps.<sup>59</sup> Our 2016 report, *Keeping the lights on: security of supply after coal*, 'stress-tested' the British power sector through to 2030 in a range of coal phase-out

58 Ben Caldecott, "Green and responsible conservatism: embedding sustainability and long-termism within the UK economy", <http://www.brightblue.org.uk/images/greenandresponsible.pdf> (2015), 39-42.

59 Amber Rudd, Speech on a new direction for UK energy policy, 18 November 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/amber-rudd-speech-on-a-new-direction-for-uk-energy-policy>.

scenarios.<sup>60</sup> In all cases examined, we found that the lights stayed on, as there was more than enough time to commission the necessary new gas. We also called for the date of the phase-out to be brought forward to at least 2023 to bring forward investment in new gas.

Chart 5.5 shows that Conservative voters decisively support the phase-out of coal-fired power stations. A total of 66% of Conservatives are supportive overall, whereas only 8% of Conservatives are overall opposed.



There is some variation in support of phasing out coal according to how Conservatives voted in the EU referendum: 74% of Remain-voting Conservatives overall support it, whereas support among Leave-voting Conservatives is lower at 62%.

Attitudes to the coal phase-out are strongly linked to broader attitudes to climate change, although there is still majority support for

60 Ben Caldecott, "Keeping the lights on: security of supply after coal", <http://green.brightblue.org.uk/s/Keeping-the-lights-on.pdf> (2016).

the coal phase-out among Conservatives who think climate change is not happening at all. While 72% of Conservatives that accept manmade climate change overall are supportive of phasing out coal, the phase-out is supported by only 58% of Conservatives that believe only in naturally-occurring climate change and 55% of Conservatives that do not accept that climate change is happening.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Conservatives have a more positive impression of renewable energy sources than of fossil fuels and nuclear. Although there is not a huge variation generally in attitude along socio-demographic lines, Conservatives' views of different energy sources sometimes differ according to the particular region in which they live.

A clear majority of Conservatives support allowing further development of onshore wind provided conditions around subsidy and a local veto were met. Younger Conservatives are much more likely than older Conservatives to support new onshore wind farms. Finally, Conservatives overall support the Government's phasing out of coal-fired power stations, which Bright Blue called for in 2015. Although the coal phase-out even wins a majority among climate sceptic Conservatives, support for the policy is stronger among Conservatives that accept manmade climate change.

## Chapter 6: Home energy improvements

This chapter will examine, first, what home energy improvements Conservatives are aware of. Second, we will test whether Conservatives have considered installing certain home energy improvements in their homes. Third, we unearth the barriers to greater uptake of these improvements. Finally, we test support for particular policies to increase uptake of home energy improvements among Conservatives.

The incentivising of home energy improvements is particularly topical this year, with the Government publishing its Emissions Reduction Plan, which will set out new policies to decarbonise domestic energy. In year one of the *Green conservatism* project, Bright Blue has published an expert policy paper, *Better homes: incentivising home energy improvements*, which analyses possible reasons why the Green Deal failed and recommends new policies to revitalise the market.<sup>61</sup> This chapter provides an overview of the awareness of, interest in, barriers to, and popularity of policies to incentivise home energy improvements.

### Awareness of home energy improvements

Home energy improvements are measures that cut carbon emissions from buildings. Improvements can either reduce domestic energy consumption or replace current heating and power systems that use

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61 Sam Hall and Ben Caldecott, "Better homes: incentivising home energy improvements", <http://green.brightblue.org.uk/s/Better-Homes-incentivising-home-energy-improvements-FINAL-5mg8.pdf> (2016).

fossil fuels with those that use renewables.<sup>62</sup>

In the polling, four kinds of home energy improvements are tested, two that reduce energy consumption and two that install a renewable energy supply. First, ‘energy efficiency measures’ such as loft insulation, wall insulation and double glazing reduce the amount of energy required to heat a home to a certain temperature. Second, ‘smart meters’ provide households and energy suppliers with near-real time data on their energy use, enabling reductions in both heat and power consumption. Third, ‘renewable heating technologies’ such as air-source heat pumps or biomass boilers use renewable fuels to provide space and water heating in homes, in the place of more carbon-intensive, traditional gas boilers. Fourth, ‘decentralised renewable electricity technologies’ such as solar panels and battery storage enable households to generate their own renewable electricity using energy from the Sun and store any surplus power in lithium-ion batteries.

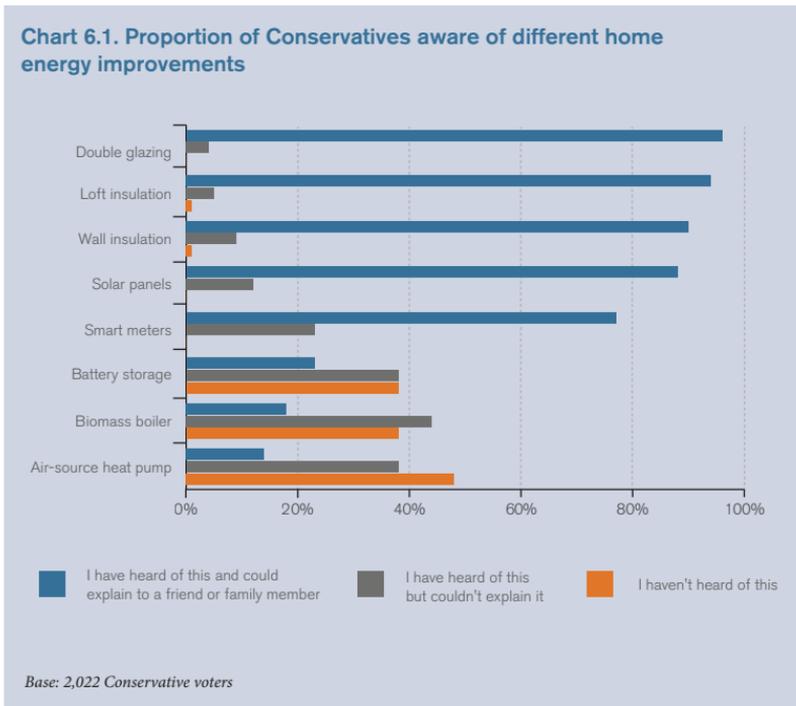
There is high awareness among Conservatives of energy efficiency measures. As Chart 6.1 shows, 96% of Conservatives are aware of double glazing and could explain it to a friend or family member; 94% have the same awareness of loft insulation, and 90% of wall insulation.

There is also high awareness among Conservatives of solar panels, a decentralised renewable electricity technology, and smart meters. Eighty-eight percent of Conservatives have heard of solar panels and could explain to a friend or family member; 77% of Conservatives gave the same reply about smart meters. The latest market statistics reveal that both these energy products have now reached mainstream consumers. Around 830,000 homes in the UK, just over 3% of all households, now have solar panels installed on their rooftops to generate electricity.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, almost 5 million smart meters are now in operation throughout homes and businesses in Great Britain, which

62 For a full and detailed list of energy efficiency measures and decentralised renewables in the UK, see Sam Hall and Ben Caldecott, “Better homes” (2016).

63 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, “Solar photovoltaics deployment”, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/585828/Solar\\_photovoltaics\\_deployment\\_December\\_2016.xlsx](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/585828/Solar_photovoltaics_deployment_December_2016.xlsx) (2017).

is just over 9% towards the Government-mandated target of offering all homes and businesses a smart meter by 2020.<sup>64</sup>



Renewable heating technologies and battery storage, a renewable electricity technology, have the lowest awareness among Conservatives of the home energy improvements we tested. Biomass boilers, which burn wood pellets to create heat, can only be explained by 18% of Conservatives. In fact, 38% of Conservatives have never heard of them. Air-source heat pumps, which use electricity to extract ambient heat from the air, are the least recognised home energy improvement examined, with just 14% of Conservatives saying they have heard of the

64 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, “Smart meters: quarterly report to end September 2016, Great Britain”, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/579197/2016\\_Q3\\_Smart\\_Meters\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/579197/2016_Q3_Smart_Meters_Report_Final.pdf) (2016).

technology and could explain it to a friend or family member. Nearly half (48%) of Conservatives have never heard of air-source heat pumps. This low awareness of renewable heating is reflected in low take-up of these technologies. There have been only 25,000 accredited installations of air-source heat pumps (0.1% of the housing stock) and 12,000 of biomass boilers (0.05% of the housing stock) as part of government's Renewable Heat Incentive scheme, which gives homeowners a tariff per unit of renewable heat they generate.<sup>65</sup> Only 23% of Conservatives can explain battery storage, which is still a very new technology, while 38% of Conservatives have never heard of it.

### Interest in installing home energy improvements

The most commonly installed type of home energy improvement among Conservatives is energy efficiency measures. As shown in Chart 6.2, 91% of Conservatives who have heard of double glazing have installed it, 83% have installed loft insulation, and 65% have installed wall insulation. The fourth more commonly installed improvement among Conservatives is smart meters, with 20% of Conservatives who have heard of them answering that they have installed one. Fifth, only 8% of Conservatives who have heard of solar panels have installed them in their homes. The remaining measures, air-source heat pump, biomass boiler, and battery storage have very low installation rates, with 2% of Conservative respondents that have heard of each measure saying that they have installed them.

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<sup>65</sup> Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, "RHI deployment data: December 2016 and Q4 2016", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/584300/RHI\\_monthly\\_official\\_statistics\\_tables\\_31\\_December\\_2016.xlsx](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/584300/RHI_monthly_official_statistics_tables_31_December_2016.xlsx) (2016).

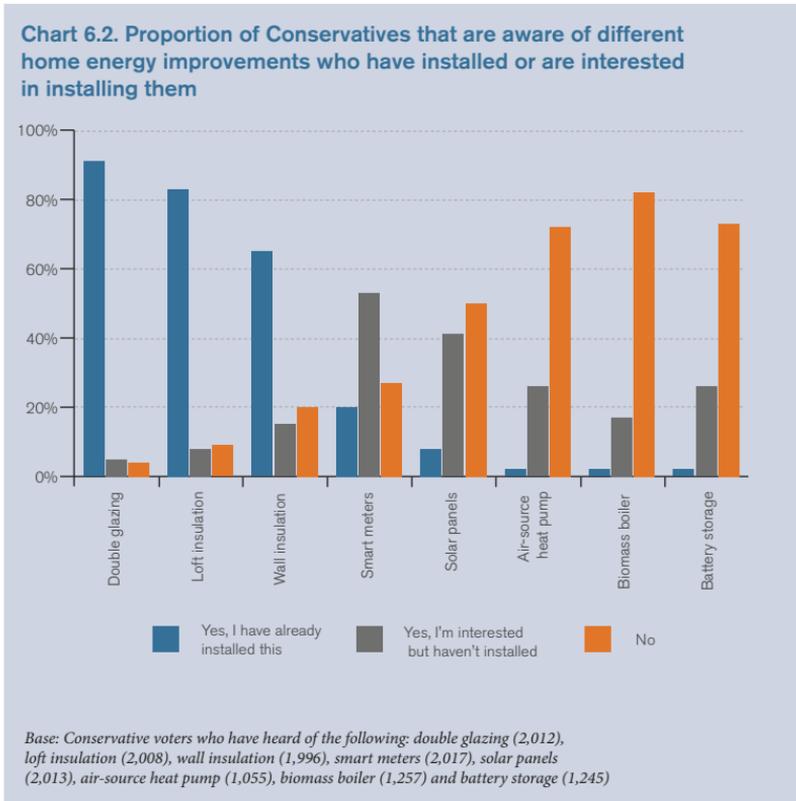


Chart 6.2 also reveals considerable latent demand for several home energy improvements among Conservatives, where someone is interested in a measure but has not yet installed it in their home. First, 53% of Conservatives that have heard of smart meters are interested in installing them, but have not done so yet. Second, 41% of Conservatives aware of solar panels would be interested in installing them in their home. Third, 26% of Conservatives aware of battery storage and of air-source heat pumps would consider installing the improvement in their home. Of the two renewable heating technologies tested, there is greater latent demand for air-source heat pumps than biomass boilers. This is an interesting finding to consider as the Government plots its strategy for decarbonising heating.

## Barriers to installing more home energy improvements

Demand among Conservatives for these home energy improvements is not being realised because of several barriers. For each measure, we asked Conservatives that said they were interested in installing it, but had not done so yet, to select as many reasons as were relevant as to why they were prevented from doing so. There are three frequently occurring barriers: high upfront cost, a lack of information, and not possible in the property.

High upfront cost is the most common barrier among Conservatives for not installing home energy improvements. For instance, 43% of Conservatives are put off from installing air-source heat pumps by the high upfront cost, which ranges from £3,000 to £10,000.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, 53% of Conservatives say that they have not installed solar panels, estimated to cost between £4,000 and £6,000, because of this factor.<sup>67</sup> High upfront cost is also the most common barrier for biomass boilers (38%) and for battery storage (31%).

The other main barriers frequently identified by Conservatives are a lack of information about other options and it not being possible in their current property. A lack of information about the different options attracted 31% of respondents when asked why they hadn't yet installed battery storage despite being interested. The biggest barrier preventing Conservatives from installing wall insulation is that it wasn't possible in the current property, with 42% of respondents selecting that response. However, most homes can in fact have their walls insulated, although it is a more expensive process for solid wall properties, which tend to have been built before 1919, than for cavity wall properties.<sup>68</sup>

If a measure is not capable of being installed in a particular property, there is little that public policy can do to address this. However, the

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<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, 34.

<sup>68</sup> Sam Hall and Ben Caldecott, "Better homes: incentivising home energy improvements", <http://green.brightblue.org.uk/s/Better-Homes-incentivising-home-energy-improvements-FINAL-5mg8.pdf> (2016), 33-34.

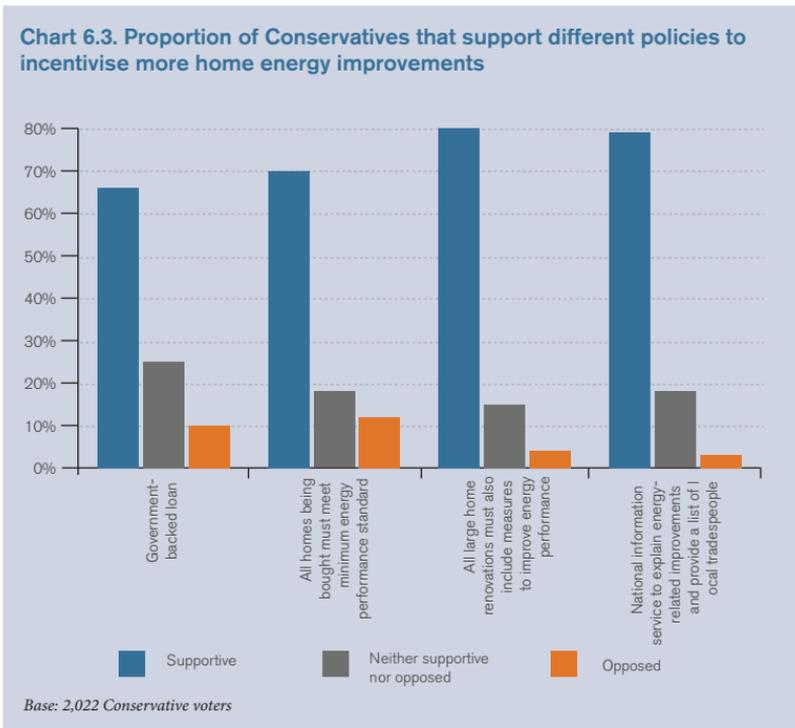
other two barriers, a high upfront cost and a lack of information about the different options, can be overcome with the right government interventions. In the next section, we test two of our policies that address these principal barriers, which we recommended in *Better homes: incentivising home energy improvement*, one of the reports from the first year of Bright Blue's *Green conservatism* project: new government-backed loans for home energy improvements and the new national information service to explain home energy improvements.<sup>69</sup>

### **Policies to incentivise more home energy improvement**

In *Better homes*, we made several recommendations to overcome barriers for installing home energy improvements and boost the market: new government-backed loans for home energy improvements, a new national information service to explain home energy improvements, new building regulations to ensure people having large home renovations also include measures to improve a home's energy efficiency, and a new rule that all homes being bought must meet a minimum energy performance rating, with some exemptions, such as for listed buildings or fuel poor households. Chart 6.3 shows that a clear majority of Conservatives support each of these four policies.

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69 Sam Hall and Ben Caldecott, "Better homes: incentivising home energy improvements", <http://green.brightblue.org.uk/s/Better-Homes-incentivising-home-energy-improvements-FINAL-5mg8.pdf> (2016), 14.



Focusing on the first policy to tackle the main barriers identified earlier in this chapter, 66% of Conservatives support the introduction of a new government-backed loan to fund the upfront cost of energy efficiency measures, which is then paid back through energy bills. This policy helps to overcome the barrier identified earlier of a high upfront cost. A government loan guarantee that would reduce the interest rate by a couple of percentage points for consumers relative to an equivalent loan offered solely by private sector lenders.<sup>70</sup> This would provide an attractive financing mechanism for energy efficiency measures, more appealing than under the Green Deal finance, that would remove the upfront cost for consumers.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, 14.

The second policy to tackle the main barriers identified above — a new national information service for the public to explain the different home energy technologies available and to provide a list of local tradespeople equipped to install them — is supported by 79% of Conservatives. This policy helps to overcome the barrier identified earlier of a lack of information about the different home energy improvement options. A similar policy was included in the Each Home Counts review, commissioned by the Government in 2015 and chaired by Peter Bonfield, the chief executive of BRE.

More surprisingly, there are large majorities of Conservatives in favour of introducing new targeted regulation to improve the energy efficiency of homes. Eighty percent of Conservatives support introducing new building regulations to ensure people having large home renovations also include measures to improve a home's energy efficiency. Only 4% of Conservatives oppose. This the most popular home energy improvement policy that was tested. A similar policy was proposed by the last Coalition government, that would have required homeowners to carry out consequential energy efficiency improvements to the rest of their property when replacing their boiler, adding an extension or converting a loft.<sup>71</sup> But it was scrapped following a high-profile media campaign against it.<sup>72</sup> It is an interesting finding, therefore, that despite being controversial under the last Government, this policy is very popular among Conservatives.

Similarly, 70% of Conservatives support a new rule that all homes being bought must meet a minimum energy performance rating, with some exemptions, such as for listed buildings or fuel poor households. Just 12% of Conservatives were opposed to it. Currently, prior to selling a home, the owner must obtain an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property, which assigns it a rating from A (highest) to G

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71 Department for Communities and Local Government, "2012 consultation on changes to the Building Regulations in England: summary of responses", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/38692/2012\\_BR\\_SOR.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/38692/2012_BR_SOR.pdf) (2012).

72 James Slack and Tamara Cohen, "Green tax on conservatories: Home improvements will trigger 10% levy", *Daily Mail*, 8 April, 2012.

(lowest) for its energy use using metrics like insulation levels, heating system, and type of window glazing. In *Better homes*, we proposed adding a further requirement that the rating on the EPC had to be above a certain minimum level.<sup>73</sup> On the basis of this polling evidence, the Government should be bold in introducing this controversial but popular policy, in order to ensure that important carbon targets are met.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that more Conservatives are aware of energy efficiency measures, such as double glazing and wall insulation, and decentralised renewable electricity measures, such as solar panels, than of renewable heating technologies, such as air-source heat pumps. Energy efficiency measures are also the most commonly installed home energy improvement among Conservatives, followed by smart meters. The other types of measures, decentralised renewable electricity and renewable heating technologies, have low uptake among those Conservatives who were aware of them.

Among Conservatives that have not installed them, the measures which attracted the greatest levels of interest were: (in order) smart meters, solar panels, battery storage, and air-source heat pumps. The three most frequently cited barriers to Conservatives installing these measures are high upfront cost, a lack of information about the different options, and the fact that the measure was not possible in their current property. Strong majorities of Conservatives support all the policies recommended in *Better homes* to address these barriers, including new government-backed loans and a minimum EPC rating for a property prior to its being sold.

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73 Sam Hall and Ben Caldecott, “Better homes”, 16.

## Chapter 7: Air pollution

This chapter examines, first, how concerned Conservatives are about air pollution in their area. Second, it tests Conservatives' support for different policies to reduce air pollution.

These issues are particularly topical following the Government's recent defeat in the High Court, where Ministers were mandated to publish a new strategy to reduce air pollution.<sup>74</sup> In year one of the *Green conservatism* project, Bright Blue has campaigned for all English cities to be enabled to establish low emission zones in pollution hotspots.<sup>75</sup>

The extent and impact of air pollution is of increasing concern to the public and politicians; this chapter enables us to analyse in detail how concerned Conservatives are and what policies they would support to tackle it.

### Concern about local air pollution

Air pollution is a major public health issue; it is estimated to contribute to around 40,000 premature deaths each year.<sup>76</sup> Air pollution has been linked to an increased incidence of respiratory and cardiovascular health conditions and, in some cases, dementia.<sup>77</sup> Bright Blue research revealed that, in 2015, 40% of local authorities in the UK breached legal

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74 Damian Carrington, "High court gives ministers deadline for tougher air pollution plan", *The Guardian*, 21 November, 2016.

75 Sam Hall, "Clean up our act and drive dirty cars off the road", *Yorkshire Post*, 28 August 2016.

76 Royal College of Physicians, "Every breath we take: the lifelong impact of air pollution", <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/file/2912/download?token=5pFurNnk> (2016).

77 *Ibid.*

limits of nitrogen dioxide, a form of air pollution.<sup>78</sup>

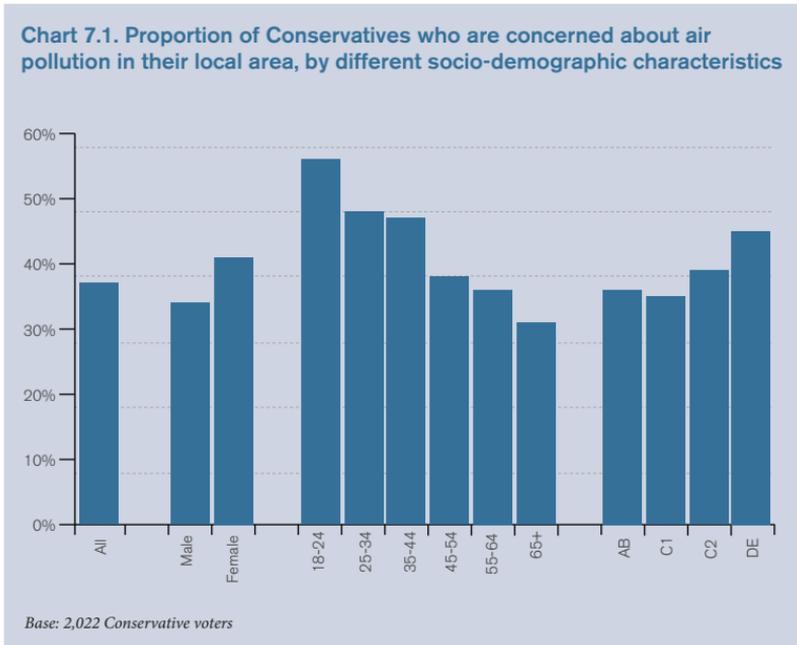
Albeit a significant one, only a minority of Conservatives (37%) are concerned about air pollution in their local area, as seen in Chart 7.1.

There was some variation between the concern about local air pollution among Conservatives and voters for other parties. UKIP voters are broadly as concerned as Conservatives about air pollution in their local area, with 38% overall saying they are concerned. However, with 52% saying they are concerned about air pollution in their local area, Labour voters are more concerned than Conservatives. So too are Liberal Democrats, of whom 45% are concerned. This could be because Conservative voters are more concentrated in rural areas, where air pollution is less of a problem, than voters for Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

However, among Conservatives, there are some variations in levels of concern about local air pollution. Chart 7.1 demonstrates that 41% of Conservative women say they are concerned, but only 34% of Conservative men. Younger Conservatives are much more likely to be concerned about air pollution than older Conservatives: 56% of 18-24-year-old Conservatives are concerned, but 31% of Conservatives aged 65 and over are. A higher proportion of Conservatives of a lower socio-economic grade are concerned about air pollution in their local area than Conservatives of a higher socio-economic grade. Chart 7.1 shows that 36% of AB Conservatives are concerned, while the proportion of concerned DE Conservatives is 45%. This finding could reflect the fact that younger Conservatives and those of a lower socioeconomic grade have higher awareness of the issue or tend to live in areas where air pollution is a more serious problem.

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78 Daniel Boffey, "Four in 10 UK councils exceed air pollution limits, figures show", *The Guardian*, 22 October, 2016.



There are also some interesting differences between Conservatives in different regions. The highest levels of concern are among Conservatives in London, where the proportion concerned about local pollution is 65%. London has the worst pollution in the UK, which is linked to around 9,500 annual premature deaths.<sup>79</sup> The two areas where concern about local air pollution is lowest are the South West (27%) and Scotland (28%), both of which have large rural components where air pollution tends to be less of an issue.

## Policies to tackle air pollution

The Government has several policies to tackle air pollution, including establishing five new low emission zones (‘Clean Air Zones’), supporting

<sup>79</sup> Heather Walton et al., “Understanding the health impacts of air pollution in London”, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/lsm/research/divisions/aes/research/ERG/research-projects/HIAinLondonKingsReport14072015final.pdf> (2015), 8.

the roll-out of charging points for electric vehicles,<sup>80</sup> strengthening the regulation of diesel engines,<sup>81</sup> and investing in clean public transport.<sup>82</sup> However, following the Government's defeat in the High Court in 2016, Ministers are also considering other policies to cut levels of air pollution more steeply, including a diesel scrappage scheme, increases in diesel taxes, and further low emission zones.<sup>83</sup> To inform this debate, we tested the Government's policies, as well as the main new policy options being discussed. A majority of Conservatives supported all the main air pollution policies, except for increasing taxes on diesel, as shown in Chart 7.2.

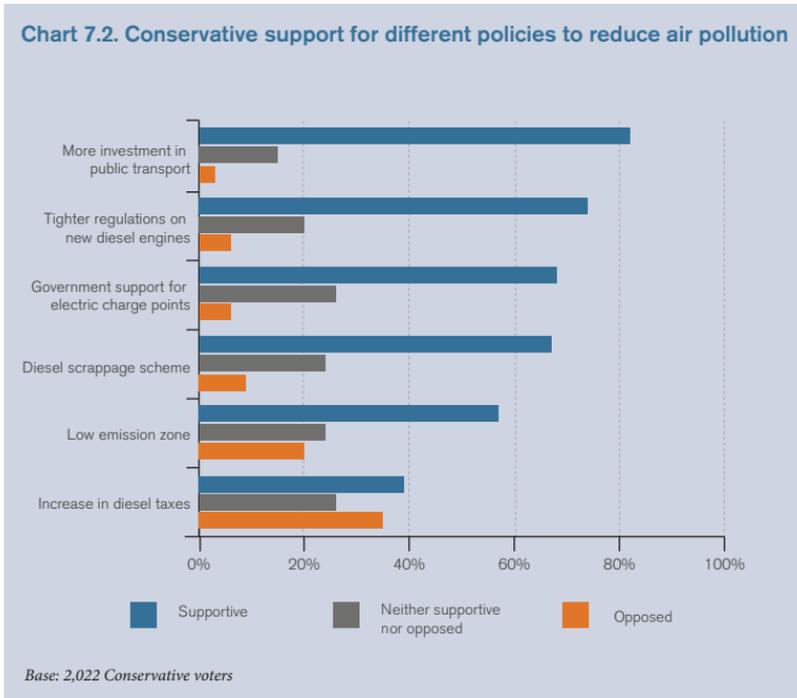
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80 Sam Hall, "A turbo-charge statement for electric vehicles", <http://green.brightblue.org.uk/blog/2016/11/25/a-turbo-charge-statement-for-electric-vehicles> (2016).

81 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, "Improving air quality in the UK: tackling nitrogen dioxide in our towns and cities", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/486636/aq-plan-2015-overview-document.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486636/aq-plan-2015-overview-document.pdf) (2015), 13-14.

82 Department for Transport, "Government awards £30 million funding for cleaner, greener bus journeys", <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-awards-30-million-funding-for-cleaner-greener-bus-journeys> (2016).

83 Kate McCann, "Officials 'drawing up plans' for diesel scrappage scheme to cut emissions", *The Telegraph*, 2 February, 2017.



The most popular policy for reducing air pollution among Conservatives are increasing investment in clean public transport. Chart 7.2 shows that 82% of Conservatives overall are supportive of this policy. The Government has a programme to invest in green public transport, such as low emission buses and trains. There are some differences between Conservatives according to how they voted in the EU referendum. A higher proportion of Conservatives that voted Remain in the EU referendum (87%) support this policy than those that voted Leave (78%).

The second most popular policy among Conservatives is tighter regulations on new diesel engines, with 74% supportive. Since 1992, the EU has consistently tightened regulations on emissions from new

diesels vehicles.<sup>84</sup>

The latest set of regulations, “Euro 6”, came into force in 2015 and set a maximum value on emissions of nitrogen oxide and particulates for new vehicles. However, when vehicles that meet the Euro 6 standard in laboratories are tested in real-world conditions, many are found to be in breach of the legal emissions standards.<sup>85</sup> However, further measures to tighten standards, such as lower emissions limits or more stringent testing regimes, would still only affect new diesel cars, and so would not reduce air pollution from the existing vehicle fleet.

Increasing government support for electric charge points is the third most popular policy to tackle air pollution among Conservatives. Overall, 68% of Conservatives are in support. The Government is increasing public funds for electric charging points and is planning to change the law to ensure that electric charging networks will be ‘inter-operable’, meaning drivers can charge their vehicles wherever they are on the road network without needing multiple charge-point memberships.<sup>86</sup>

The fourth most popular policy is a diesel scrappage scheme, under which motorists would receive a cash payment from the government in return for trading in an old diesel vehicle. Overall, 67% of Conservatives support this policy. There are currently nearly 12 million diesel vehicles on the road, which have higher nitrogen dioxide emissions than petrol cars.<sup>87</sup> A diesel scrappage scheme would incentivise a gradual replacement of this sizeable diesel fleet with low emission alternatives. However, any scheme could be expensive and difficult to target at drivers in the most polluted areas.

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84 Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, “Euro-6 comes into force across Europe”, <https://www.smmmt.co.uk/2015/09/euro-6-comes-into-force-across-europe/> (2015).

85 Transport and Environment, “Do not breathe here: beware the invisible killer”, [https://www.transportenvironment.org/sites/te/files/publications/Dont\\_Breathe\\_Here\\_report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.transportenvironment.org/sites/te/files/publications/Dont_Breathe_Here_report_FINAL.pdf) (2015).

86 Department for Transport, “Proposed ultra low emission vehicles measures for inclusion in the Modern Transport Bill”, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/590680/ulev-modern-transport-bill-consultation-gov-response.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590680/ulev-modern-transport-bill-consultation-gov-response.pdf) (2016).

87 Department for Transport, “Transport statistics: Great Britain 2016”, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/576095/tsgb-2016-report-summaries.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576095/tsgb-2016-report-summaries.pdf) (2016), 18.

There is significant divergence of views towards a diesel scrappage scheme between Conservatives depending on their age. In general, younger Conservatives are more supportive of a diesel scrappage scheme than older Conservatives. Eighty-three percent of 18-24-year-old Conservatives and 78% of 25-34-year-old Conservatives support the policy. By contrast, only 67% of 55-64 year-old Conservatives and 62% of Conservatives aged 65 and over are supportive of a diesel scrappage scheme.

The fifth most popular policy is introducing a new charge on old, polluting cars, lorries, and buses that drive through city centres, or a 'low emission zone'. A majority (57%) of Conservatives support the policy. The Government only has plans to introduce five low emission zones ('Clean Air Zones') by 2020 in addition to the ultra-low emission zone in London, significantly fewer than the number of areas affected by illegal air pollution.<sup>88</sup> Bright Blue has been campaigning for all English cities to have the powers and funding to set up a low emission zone in pollution hotspots.<sup>89</sup>

There are significant differences in support for low emission zones between Conservatives and voters for other major parties. Voters for centre-left parties are less supportive of low emission zones than Conservatives, with 51% of Labour voters and 47% of Liberal Democrat voters backing the policy, compared to 57% of Conservatives. Support for low emission zones is lowest among UKIP voters, of whom only 46% support low emission zones.

The least popular policy that the polling tests is increasing taxes on diesel cars, such as VAT, Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) or fuel duty. Only 39% of Conservatives supported this policy, and 35% were opposed. The low level of support for this policy might reflect the fact it could retroactively penalise drivers of diesel vehicles. In the 2017 Spring

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88 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, "Improving air quality in the UK: tackling nitrogen dioxide in our towns and cities", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/486636/aq-plan-2015-overview-document.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486636/aq-plan-2015-overview-document.pdf) (2015), 20.

89 Sam Hall, "Clean up our act and drive dirty cars off the road", *Yorkshire Post*, 28 August, 2016.

Budget, the Government announced it would be reviewing the tax treatment of diesel vehicles as part of its new air quality plan.<sup>90</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that only a minority, albeit a significant minority, of Conservatives are concerned about local air pollution, especially compared to voters for other parties. It is higher among women than men, among DE Conservatives than AB Conservatives, and among younger Conservatives than older ones. High concern levels are also concentrated in areas where pollution is particularly acute, such as London.

Majorities of Conservatives support all the measures to tackle air pollution, except for increases in diesel taxation. The most popular air pollution policy among Conservatives is increased investment in cleaner public transport.

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90 HM Treasury, "Spring Budget 2017", [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/597467/spring\\_budget\\_2017\\_web.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597467/spring_budget_2017_web.pdf) (2017), 48.

## Chapter 8: The UK's international role on the environment

This chapter examines whether Conservatives support the UK being an international leader on climate change, and their reasons for their view. It also analyses what international environmental issues they think the UK government should be focusing on.

The UK's role on the international stage on the environment is particularly topical as a result of Brexit. The Environment Secretary has said that the UK should assume an even greater leadership role on the international environment following the vote.<sup>91</sup> Bright Blue will soon be publishing a report on how the environment can be embedded within the international development budget. We will also soon be launching a new project on conservation, which will propose an ambitious new approach to some international environment issues that joins up the work of different government departments.

This chapter examines whether Conservatives believe we should take a lead on environment issues on the global stage, and which ones we should focus on.

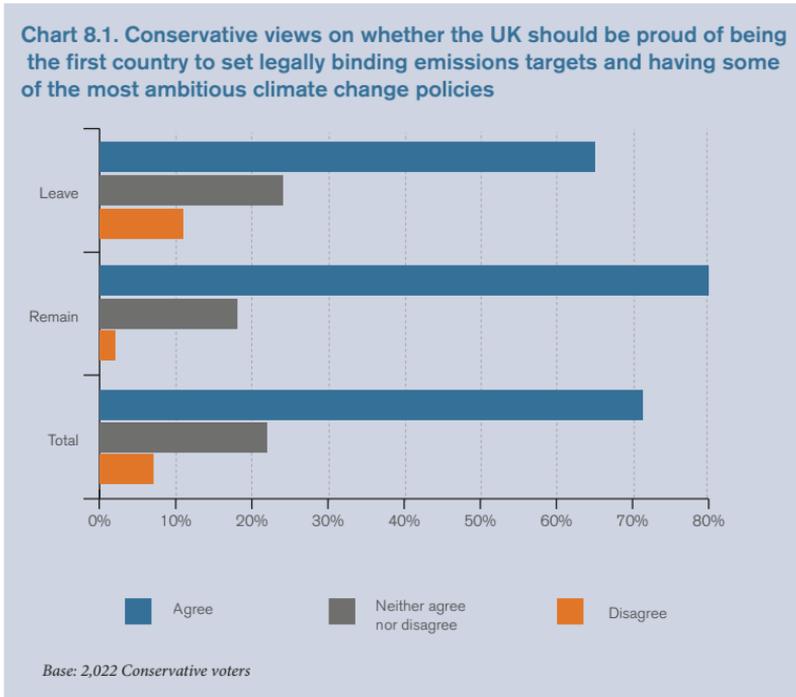
### International leadership on climate change

A very clear majority of Conservatives (71%) are proud of the UK being the first country in the world to set legally binding emissions reduction

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91 Andrea Leadsom, A rural economy and environment that work for everyone, 3 October, 2016, <http://press.conservatives.com/post/151291662770/leadsom-a-rural-economy-and-environment-that-work>.

targets and having some of the most ambitious policies to tackle climate change, as Chart 8.1 illustrates. Only 7% of Conservatives disagree. The Climate Change Act 2008 was passed with overwhelming majorities from both parties, with David Cameron, then Leader of the Opposition, the first major party leader to publicly support legislation setting binding emissions reduction targets.<sup>92</sup>



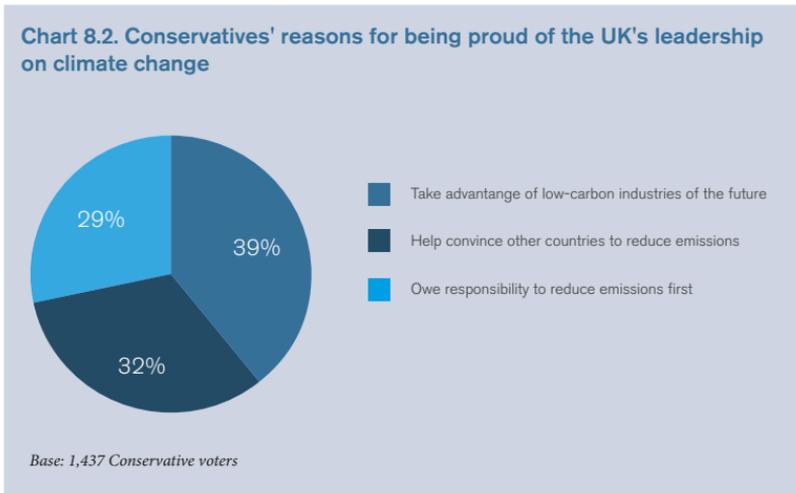
There is some divergence between Conservatives and voters for other parties. Conservatives are slightly less proud of the UK's leadership on climate change than Labour voters, of whom 74% are proud of this achievement, and Liberal Democrat voters, of whom 77% are proud. But Conservatives are in general more proud of the UK's leadership

92 Institute for Government, "Climate Change Act (2008)", [https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/climate\\_change\\_act.pdf](https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/climate_change_act.pdf) (2011).

on climate change than UKIP voters, of whom 68% say they are proud.

There is some divergence among Conservatives in their views on the UK's climate leadership. Chart 8.1 above demonstrates that a higher proportion of Conservative Remain voters are proud of the UK's pioneering action on climate change than Conservative Leaver voters. While 80% of Conservative Remain voters agree they are proud, only 65% of Conservative Leave voters do.

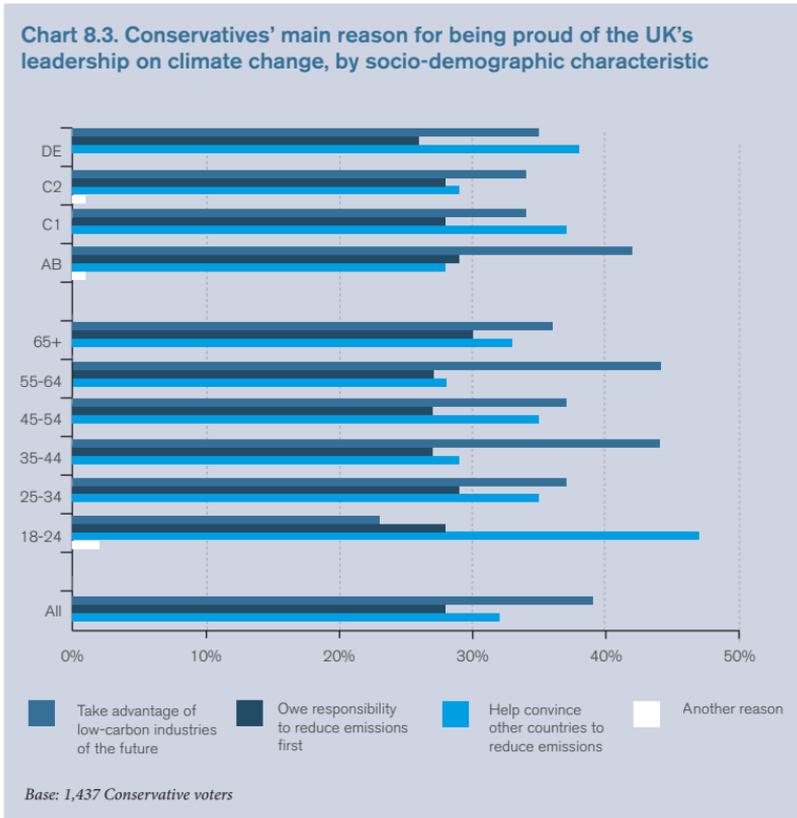
As shown in Chart 8.2, the most popular reason for Conservatives agreeing that they are proud of the UK's climate leadership is that it could take advantage of opportunities in the new low-carbon economy and industries of the future, with 39% of Conservatives reporting this. The second most popular reason is that Britain leading on emission reduction would help to convince other countries to also reduce their emissions, with 32% of Conservatives saying this. Finally, the least popular argument is that as one of the first industrial countries, Britain has a responsibility to also be one of the first countries to eliminate its carbon emissions, with only 28% of Conservatives believing this.



There is some variation among Conservatives according to different socio-demographic characteristics, as shown in Chart 8.3 below. More

Conservatives of a higher socio-economic grade choose the economic opportunities of low carbon industries as their main reason for being proud of UK climate leadership than those of a lower socio-economic grade: 42% of AB Conservatives specify this reason, compared to 35% of DE Conservatives. This narrative about the economic opportunities of decarbonisation is also more popular among older Conservatives than younger ones, as 44% of 55-64 year-old Conservatives and 36% of Conservatives aged 65 and over choose it, compared to only 23% of 18-24 year olds.

Conversely, younger Conservatives and Conservatives of a lower socio-economic grade are more supportive of the narrative that the UK's climate leadership helps to convince other countries to cut their emissions too, relative to older Conservatives and Conservatives of a higher socio-economic grade. While 47% of 18-24 year-old Conservatives and 35% of 25-34 year-old Conservatives choose this argument to describe their own views, just 28% of 55-64 year-old Conservatives and 33% of Conservatives aged 65 and over chose it. Only 29% of AB Conservatives choose this as their main reason for being proud, compared to 38% of DE Conservatives.



There is a significant difference between the proportion of Labour voters and of Conservatives that say they are proud because of the UK's obligation as one of the first industrialised countries to reduce its emissions the fastest. Thirty-eight percent of Labour voters say the argument about Britain's responsibility is why they are proud of the UK response to climate change, making it the most popular argument for this group of voters. This is a higher proportion than for Conservatives (28%).

## Global environmental issues

There are major environmental issues across the globe, from the effects of climate change to the illegal wildlife trade. This report highlights six, which the Government is already focusing on to varying degrees. For example, on marine reserves, the Government has designated new protected areas around some UK overseas territories, which protect marine species from commercial fishing;<sup>93</sup> on climate change, the Government advocated an ambitious deal to combat climate change at the UN summit in Paris in 2015;<sup>94</sup> and on tackling illegal wildlife trade, Ministers have recently announced that they will ban in the UK the sale of ivory products made after 1947.<sup>95</sup>

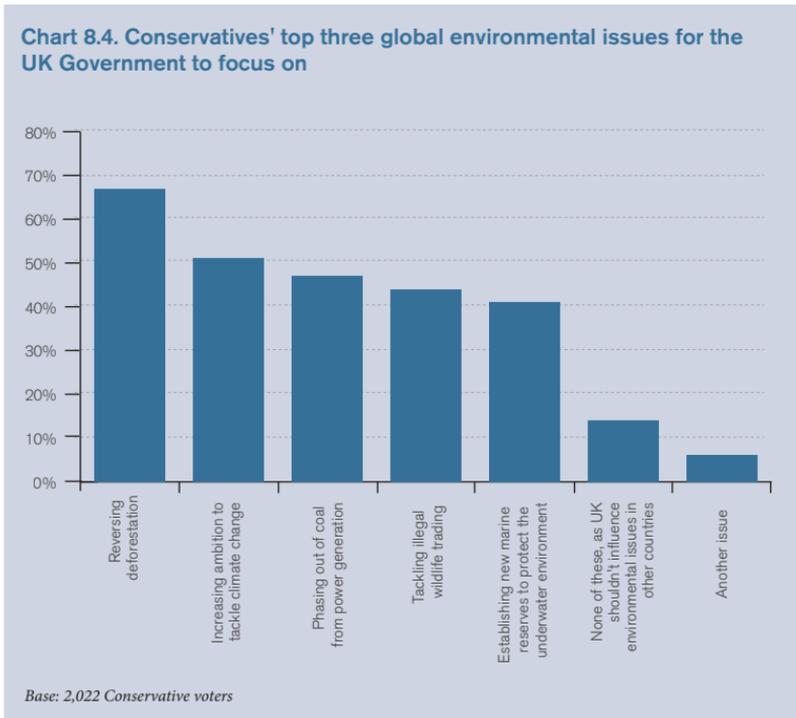
More Conservatives want to see the Government prioritise reversing deforestation than any other global environmental issue, as 67% put it among the top three issues they wanted government to focus on (see Chart 8.4). The second most commonly chosen environmental issue is increasing ambition to tackle climate change, which 51% Third, 47% of Conservatives select phasing out coal from power generation. Fifth, 44% of Conservatives select tackling illegal wildlife trading. Sixth, 41% agree that establishing new marine reserves should be one of the government's top three priorities for the global environment. Seventh, 14% of Conservatives choose 'None of these, as the UK shouldn't influence environmental issues in other countries.' This is an important finding, as it reveals that only a very small minority of Conservatives want the Government to eschew an international role on the environment. Finally, 3% of Conservative respondents answer 'another issue'.

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93 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "UK set to protect 4 million square kilometres of ocean", <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-set-to-protect-four-million-square-kilometres-of-ocean> (2016).

94 David Cameron, Speech to the COP21 summit in Paris, 30 November 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-to-the-cop21-summit-in-paris>.

95 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, "UK ban on modern day ivory sales", <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-ban-on-modern-day-ivory-sales> (2016).



Conservatives have different priorities on international environmental issues according to age. For instance, younger Conservatives are much more likely to select climate-related challenges, such as phasing out of coal from power generation and increasing global ambition to tackle climate change, than older Conservatives. Of 18-24 year-old Conservatives, 78% and 75% put in their top three priorities phasing out coal from power generation and increasing ambition to tackle climate change respectively. Similarly, 56% of 24-34 year-old Conservatives place phasing out coal among the top three priorities for government and 55% pick increasing global ambition to tackle climate change. Conversely, only 41% and 43% of Conservatives aged between 55-64 year old put phasing out coal and increasing global ambition in their top three international environmental priorities respectively.

Likewise, only 43% of Conservatives aged 65 and over want to see government prioritise international coal phase-out in their top three, and only 47% choose increasing global ambition on climate change.

There are also significant disparities between Conservatives of different genders in their responses to two issues: the phasing out of coal from power generation and tackling the illegal wildlife trade. Significantly more Conservative men name the coal phase-out as a global environmental issue they want prioritised than Conservative women. Overall, 55% of Conservative men choose this issue to be among the top three focuses for government, while only 37% of Conservative women do. Conversely, a higher proportion of Conservative women wanted to see tackling the illegal wildlife trade made a government priority than Conservative men. In total, 49% of Conservative women select tackling the illegal wildlife trade for their top three international environmental priorities, as opposed 37% of Conservative men.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that an overwhelming majority of Conservatives take pride in the UK being a world-leader on tackling climate change. The most common reason is that having some of the most ambitious emission reduction targets in the world enables the UK to take advantage of the low-carbon industries of the future. In its international environment policy, Conservatives want to see the Government prioritise reversing deforestation first of all. Increasing global action to tackle climate change, which was the second most common answer overall, is more popular with younger Conservatives than older ones. Only a very small minority of Conservatives believe that the Government should not adopt an international leadership role on environmental issues.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

The aim of this report was to unearth the views of Conservatives about the environment, in particular about climate change and the natural environment, to shape the decision-making process of policymakers and politicians. This research sought to identify both the political opportunities for implementing popular centre-right policies that protect the environment, as well as the political challenges where support for environmental policies among conservatives is weak.

Our report examined what Conservative views are on: the environment generally; the future of EU environmental protections after Brexit; Britain's power sector; home energy improvements; air pollution; and the UK's international role on the environment.

The report revealed nine main findings:

- **One of the most important environmental issues for Conservatives is climate change.** A clear majority of Conservatives accept the scientific consensus that climate change is happening and mostly caused by human activity. Over seven in ten Conservatives say they are proud of the UK's international leadership on tackling climate change. Tackling climate change and increasing renewable energy generation are two of the top three environmental issues for Conservatives. Increasing global ambition to tackle climate change is the second most common priority for Conservatives for the UK's leadership role on the environment internationally.
- **Conservatives consistently express concern about the natural**

**environment.** A clear majority of Conservatives are concerned about the state of the natural environment. Although roughly the same proportion of Conservatives are concerned about the impacts of climate change, concern for the natural environment is more consistent across Conservatives with different socio-demographic characteristics. The most popular narrative about climate change among Conservatives is that policies to mitigate climate change also benefit the natural environment. The EU environmental regulation that most Conservatives want strengthening after Brexit is protections for habitats and wildlife.

- **Conservatives care about the environment but are less likely to view it as a priority than voters from some other parties.** A majority of Conservatives are concerned both about the state of the natural environment and about the impacts of climate change. Only a very small minority of Conservatives consider the environment to be one of the most important political issues in Britain, however. Labour and Liberal Democrat voters, by contrast, are more likely to consider it one of the most important political issues in Britain.
- **Conservatives are very supportive of renewable energy relative to other sources of energy and want the Government to encourage it.** The most popular energy sources for electricity generation among Conservatives are all renewable, ahead of nuclear and ahead of fossil fuels. Even onshore wind, which the Government has sought to scale back, has a positive favourability rating among Conservatives and, if conditions around subsidy are met, their further development is supported. Interestingly, of all environmental issues, increasing renewable energy generation is most important for Conservatives. Conservatives also support increasing the current EU target for renewable energy generation after Brexit.
- **Conservatives support policies to reduce air pollution, although**

**only a minority are concerned about air pollution locally.** Only two in five Conservatives are concerned about air pollution in their local area, although this becomes a majority in places such as London where the problem is particularly acute. But improving air quality is the second most common environmental issue Conservatives want to see the government act on. Conservatives also support increasing the current EU air pollution reduction targets after Brexit, as well as several specific policies to combat air pollution including more low emission zones, which Conservatives are generally more supportive of than voters for other parties.

- **Conservatives support many particular policies that protect the environment, including targeted government regulation that is often thought controversial on the centre-right.** Conservatives support maintaining the main existing EU environmental regulations after Brexit and, in some cases, want to see them strengthened. They also support policies to phase out coal from electricity generation, to mandate that all homes being sold meet a minimum energy performance standard, to require major home renovations to reduce the property's overall carbon emissions, and to tighten regulations on new diesel engines.
- **Conservatives want to either maintain or strengthen the main current EU environmental regulations after Brexit.** A majority of Conservatives, including a majority of Leave-voting Conservatives, support at least maintaining the current EU regulations that protect the environment. In five areas, water quality, air pollution, habitats and wildlife, renewable energy generation, and household waste recycling, a majority of Conservatives want current environmental regulations to be strengthened.
- **Conservatives do not want to see the UK stepping back from its international leadership role on the environment.** A very clear majority of Conservatives are proud of the UK being the first country in the world to set legally binding carbon reduction targets

through the 2008 Climate Change Act. As environmental issues for the Government to act upon internationally, most Conservatives support a focus on reducing deforestation around the world and increasing the ambition to tackle climate change. A very small minority of Conservatives think that the Government should not focus at all on environmental issues in other countries.

- **There is significant potential demand among Conservatives for installing home energy improvements that could be unlocked with popular policies.** Majorities of Conservatives have already installed the main energy efficiency measures: double glazing, wall insulation, and loft insulation. There is significant interest among Conservatives for installing smart meters, solar panels, battery storage, and air-source heat pumps. The main barriers preventing uptake of these home energy improvements among Conservatives are in particular a high upfront cost, but also the lack of information about the different options and that the measures are not possible in the current property. A majority of Conservatives support the two policies we advocated to overcome these barriers: government-backed loans to pay for home energy improvements and a new information services with details of the different measures and local tradespeople. A majority of Conservatives also support minimum energy performance standards for homes prior to sale, which we advocated in our report *Better homes*.

Overall, we found very little variation among Conservatives in their views on the environment. What differences existed, according to socio-demographic characteristics, tended to be relatively small. Crucially, this variation rarely meant that certain groups of Conservatives were in favour of an environmental policy or concerned about an environmental issue, while other groups of Conservatives were opposed or unconcerned.

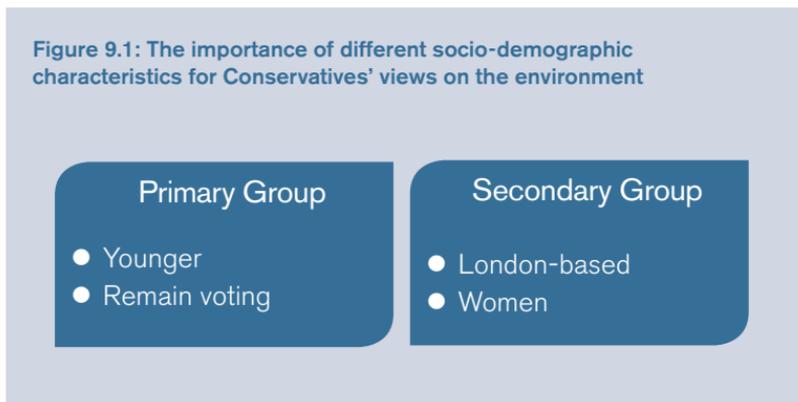
But we did find that certain socio-demographic characteristics

made Conservatives slightly more likely to be concerned about the environment. Young Conservatives and Conservatives that voted Remain in the EU referendum tended to be more supportive of policies to protect the environment in general and policies to tackle climate change in particular. But the divergence is small, with older Conservatives and Conservatives that voted Leave still supportive of many environmental policies.

There was also occasional variation among Conservatives by geographic region and gender. Specifically, air pollution was more of a concern for Conservatives in London than elsewhere in the country and for Conservative women.

We can divide these socio-demographic characteristics into two groups: a prime group, which includes characteristics that are consistently associated with more concern for and support for policies that protect the environment, and a second group, which includes characteristics that are sometimes associated with these views. This is shown in Figure 9.1.

**Figure 9.1: The importance of different socio-demographic characteristics for Conservatives' views on the environment**



This report has demonstrated the concern among Conservatives for the environment and their support for particular policies that protect the environment, including those that Bright Blue has advocated as part of our *Green conservatism* project. There is no electoral advantage

for the Conservative Party, therefore, in reducing the current levels of ambition on the environment, especially after Brexit. Indeed, this report shows that such an approach would not be popular among their voters, nor among those that have voted for the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party, to whom the Conservatives should be trying to appeal ahead of the next General Election. This report also shows that some of the most popular policies among Conservatives are targeted government regulations that safeguard and enhance the environment. The Government is currently considering its policy response to a number of environmental issues, from the future of EU environmental regulations after Brexit to the policies to include in the Emissions Reduction Plan to meet carbon targets. This report shows strong support among all kinds of Conservatives for the Government to adopt an ambitious, conservative agenda on the environment.

## Annex: POLLING QUESTIONS

- 1) **On 7 May 2015, the UK voted in a General Election. How did you vote in that election, if you voted at all?**
  - Conservative
  - Labour
  - Liberal Democrat
  - The UK Independence Party
  - Plaid Cymru
  - SNP
  - Another Party
  
- 2) **On the 23 June 2016, the UK voted in a referendum about whether it should remain a member, or leave, the European Union. How did you vote in the EU referendum, if you voted at all?**
  - Leave
  - Remain
  - I did not vote
  - Prefer not to say
  
- 3) **What are the most important issues a) for the country as a whole? b) for you and your family? [Most important, Second most important, Third most important]**
  - Getting the economy growing and creating jobs

- Cutting the deficit and the debt
- Improving the NHS
- Improving schools
- Protecting the environment
- Dealing with crime
- Defending Britain's interests in Europe
- Reforming welfare to cut benefit dependency
- Controlling immigration
- Tackling the cost of living
- Other (please specify)
- Nothing
- Don't know

4) **With regard to climate change, which of the following is closest to your view – even if none of them is exactly right?**

- Climate change is happening, and is mostly caused by human activities
- Climate change is happening, and is mostly caused by natural phenomena beyond human control
- Climate change is not happening

5) **To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?** [Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree]

- I am concerned about the impacts of climate change
- [For those that accept that manmade climate change is happening] To date, the UK government's policies to tackle climate change have been insufficient
- I am concerned about the state of the UK's natural environment (such as wildlife, landscapes, waterways, forests)
- I am concerned about air pollution in my local area
- An overwhelming consensus of scientists believe climate

change is a problem

- The risks of climate change, if it turns out to be true, are too great for us to ignore it
- Stewardship of our environment is an obligation we have to future generations
- Fossil fuels are running out, and we need to develop alternative sources of energy
- New low-carbon industries present a major economic opportunity
- Climate change policies like planting trees and reducing air pollution will also help protect local wildlife and landscapes
- The UK should be proud of being the first country in the world to set legally binding emission reduction targets and having some of the most ambitious policies for tackling climate change

6) [For those that are proud of UK leadership on tackling climate change]

**You agreed that the UK should be proud of being the first country in the world to set legally binding emission reduction targets and having some of the most ambitious policies for tackling climate change. Why is that? Choose the one argument that most closely reflects your views**

- Britain leading on emission reduction will help to convince other countries to reduce their emissions
- As one of the first industrial countries, Britain has a responsibility to also be one of the first countries to eliminate its carbon emissions
- Britain could take advantage of opportunities in the new low-carbon economy and industries of the future
- Another reason

7) [For those that are not proud of UK leadership on tackling climate

change]

**You disagreed that the UK should be proud of being the first country in the world to set legally binding emission reduction targets and having some of the most ambitious policies for tackling climate change. Why is that?**

- Britain shouldn't harm its own industry when other countries are not cutting their emissions
- Consumers in Britain are already paying too much to reduce emissions
- Climate change isn't a major problem
- Another reason

**8) Of the following environmental issues, which do you think are the most important for the government to act upon?** ['Most important', 'Second most important', 'Third most important', 'None of these']

- Reducing littering
- Increasing rates of recycling
- Reducing use of plastic carrier bags
- Tackling the decline in bee population
- Preventing development on greenfield land
- Stopping fracking
- Improving air pollution
- Avoiding airport expansion
- Preventing ocean acidification
- Preventing loss of wildlife
- Improving poor insulation of the housing stock
- Removing microbeads from cosmetics
- Preventing deforestation
- Increasing renewable energy generation
- Tackling climate change

**9) Through the planning system and funding for environmental schemes, the Government is able to protect and improve natural spaces throughout the country. When making such decisions, which of the following types of natural spaces do you think the government should prioritise? Please choose up to three types of environment.**

- Local parks
- National parks
- Forests
- Beaches
- Nature reserves
- Wetland centres
- Nature trails
- Rivers
- Lakes
- Mountain ranges
- Seas
- None of these

**10) The UK has voted to leave the European Union and will therefore have the opportunity to scrap or alter laws that were originally written by the EU.**

**In your opinion, what should happen to each of the following types of environmental regulation?** ['Scrap', 'Weaken', 'Keep the same', 'Strengthen', 'Don't know']

- Water quality and beach cleanliness standards
- Air pollution reduction targets
- Fishing quotas
- Protections for habitats and wildlife
- Restrictions on use of pesticides and fertilisers in agriculture
- Renewable energy generation targets
- Household waste recycling targets

- Ban on production of GM crops
- Regulations to increase energy efficiency of household appliances

**11) Another part of the EU, the Common Agricultural Policy, gives payment to farmers to promote increased food production and to improve the environment. Do you think the UK should continue to give payments to farmers once we have left the EU?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**12) [For those that support continued farm payments post-Brexit or that do not know]**

**If, after Brexit, farmers are still given some payments by the UK, what should be the most important rationale for how these subsidies are allocated?** Choose the option that is closest to your view, even if none of them is exactly right.

- Subsidies should be paid in order to increase the production of food in the UK
- Subsidies should be paid in order to support farming practices that improve the environment (such as tree planting or natural flood management)
- Subsidies should be paid in order to support low-income farmers

**13) On a scale of 0 to 10, how positive you are about each of the following energy sources that are possible in the UK, where 0 means you feel very negative about this mode of generation, 10 means that you feel very positive about it, and 5 means you feel neutral about this way of generating energy?**

- Coal
- Gas

Green conservatives?

- Nuclear
- Onshore wind
- Offshore wind
- Solar
- Tidal
- Biomass

**14) Do you support the further development of onshore wind farms?**

- Yes
- Yes, but not in my area
- Yes, but not if they receive subsidies
- No
- Don't know

**15) Below is a list of energy-related appliances and improvements – which have you heard of?** [I haven't heard of this, I have heard of this but couldn't explain it, I have heard of this and could explain to a friend or family member]

- Wall insulation
- Loft insulation
- Double glazing
- Air-source heat pump
- Biomass boiler
- Solar panels
- Battery storage
- Smart meters

[For those that have heard of a measure]

**16) Have you ever considered installing the following energy improvements in your home?** [Yes, I have already installed this; Yes, I'm interested but haven't installed; No]

- Wall insulation
- Loft insulation
- Double glazing
- Air-source heat pump
- Biomass boiler
- Solar panels
- Battery storage
- Smart meters

17) [For those that are interested in installing a measure but haven't yet]

**You said you are interested in installing some of these energy improvements but haven't done so yet – why is that?** [Choose all that apply]:

- High upfront cost
- Lack of attractive financing options
- Poor quality insulation
- Hassle/disruption to domestic life
- Complexity of the process
- Lack of information about the different options
- Not possible in my current home
- Have other home improvement priorities
- Does not increase the value of my home
- None of these

18) **To what extent would you support the following policies if they were adopted by the Government?** [Very supportive, Somewhat supportive, Neither supportive nor opposed, Somewhat opposed, Very opposed]

- A new government-backed loan for household energy efficiency measures, paid back through energy bills
- A new rule that all homes being bought meet a minimum

energy performance rating rating (There would be some exemptions, such as for listed buildings, fuel poor households, etc.)

- Phasing out coal from electricity generation by 2025, provided enough new generating capacity can be built.
- New building regulations to make sure people having large home renovations also include measures to improve a home's energy efficiency
- A new national information service for the public to explain the different home energy technologies available and provide a list of local tradespeople equipped to install them

**19) To what extent would you support the following policies for reducing air pollution in your area?** [Very supportive, Somewhat supportive, Neither supportive nor opposed, Somewhat opposed, Very opposed]

- A charge on old, polluting cars, lorries, and buses from driving in city centres (a low emission zone)
- A discount on a new electric vehicle when trading in an old diesel car
- Tighter regulations on new diesel engines
- An increase in taxes on diesel cars (such as VAT, VED, or fuel duty)
- More public investment in new, clean public transport
- Government support for more electric charging points

**20) Which global environmental challenge should the UK government choose to focus on?** [‘First preference’, ‘Second preference’, ‘Third preference’]

- Phasing out of coal from power generation
- Reversing deforestation
- Tackling illegal wildlife trading

- Establishing new marine reserves to protect the underwater environment
- Increasing global ambition to tackle climate change
- Another issue
- None of these, as the UK shouldn't campaign on environmental issues in other countries

Preserving and enhancing the environment for future generations to enjoy should be at the heart of conservative thinking. But a small number of high-profile conservatives are sceptical of environmental policies, particularly those that mitigate climate change.

This polling report unearths what most Conservative voters think about protecting the natural environment and reducing the harmful effects of climate change. It examines the views of Conservatives, including those with different socio-demographic characteristics, on key environmental issues such as air pollution, home energy improvements, Britain's power sector, and the future of environmental regulations post-Brexit.



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