

# Lucent

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Greener UK Evaluation

February 2023

## Executive summary

The [Greener UK](#) coalition was established in September 2016, in response to the UK's vote to leave the European Union, to collaborate in a strategic way to ensure that environmental protections were maintained and enhanced during the Brexit process. During 2022, an independent evaluation was conducted to review the impact of the coalition and to draw out lessons for future collaboration and impact.

The evaluation found an overwhelmingly positive picture of Greener UK's work, including:

- Clear influence over key legislation
- Stronger relationships within and beyond the sector

This was made possible by:

- The mobilising threat from Brexit to UK environmental protection
- An effective model of coalition working, with core capacity and specialist expertise, high-level engagement from partners, and significant delegated autonomy
- Collective discipline around an agreed position
- A level of expertise in the legislative process and an ability to engage the expertise of partner organisations and legal expertise
- High quality, timely briefings, along with media articles and other outputs
- Astute use of opportunities that arose, notably during Michael Gove's time as Secretary of State at Defra

There were some challenges for the coalition around:

- Ongoing positioning in relation to changing forms of Brexit
- Navigating the dynamics of devolution
- Trade policy
- Public campaigning

The operational arrangements for Greener UK generally worked well, though there were some areas of complexity and ambiguity. There were some challenges in relationships with civil society networks and organisations outside the core partnership, but with time and care these tended to improve over time. The coalition was better resourced than is typical for such initiatives, but overall delivered very good value for money.

For future collaboration and impact, the sector should seriously consider:

- How the relationships, reputation, knowledge and other assets of the coalition can be successfully passed on
- How some of the valuable functions of Greener UK can best be arranged and resourced in future, recognising that the context and needs of the sector continue to evolve.

Overall, we conclude that Greener UK:

- Is a powerful example of strong sector collaboration having very significant influence, particularly on key environmental legislation
- Has provided additional benefits of working together – including learning, pooling expertise, new relationships, greater trust
- Was well positioned for influence over legislation and policy, and played a smaller role in public campaigning
- Has had successes and struggles in working across the four jurisdictions of the UK
- Shows the importance of coalitions being sufficiently resourced, bringing parliamentary and technical expertise, and being trusted with sufficient autonomy and flexibility
- Demonstrated value for money

# Introduction

The [Greener UK](#) coalition was established in September 2016, in response to the UK's vote to leave the European Union. The coalition brought together major environmental organisations with a combined public membership of over 8 million, to collaborate in a strategic way to ensure that environmental protections were maintained and enhanced during the Brexit process, particularly through ambitious domestic legislation.

In late July 2022, following a call for proposals, Greener UK commissioned Lucent Consultancy to undertake an independent assessment of Greener UK's impact, with the aim of supporting learning for future work together and environmental advocacy more broadly.

The Terms of reference for the review were:

- To conclude the degree to which Greener UK has met its objectives over the course of the project.
- To identify any additional benefits the project brought the environmental NGO sector.
- To identify the most successful parts of the project and why.
- To assess what worked less well and how this could have been addressed.
- To conclude what lessons can be drawn for future collaboration and impact.
- To assess the degree to which the level of financial and staff resource committed to Greener UK were justified in terms of its impact

# Methodology

The evaluation was undertaken by Katherine Rake (Director, [Lucent Consultancy](#)) and Nick Perks ([www.nickperks.org.uk](http://www.nickperks.org.uk)).

The main elements of the evaluation were:

- a desk review of documentation, including Greener UK Board Minutes (70 meetings covering 2016 to 2022), reports to funders, annual reviews and other internal evaluation, and an article and book chapters<sup>1</sup> written by academics Carolyn Abbot and Maria Lee on their experience of the coalition. Other materials such as a media log and partner testimonials were also considered.
- 12 internal stakeholder interviews, including current and previous staff, board members and working group members
- 11 external stakeholder interviews, including relevant MPs, peers and officials
- Emerging findings were shared and discussed with Greener UK staff.
- A draft report was shared with the Greener UK Board at its final meeting in November 2022 in a workshop format. Comments and reflections from that discussion have been incorporated into this final report.

The longlist of stakeholders was identified by Greener UK staff in consultation with the evaluators, and interviewees were drawn from this group. Successful efforts were made to include individuals with a range of perspectives, political stances and professional roles, and to cover the four UK jurisdictions. Interviews were arranged by the evaluators. Individual interviewees are not listed or identified in this report, and any quotes included in the report are not attributed.

## Limitations and mitigation

The evaluation did not include a substantive review of external documentation, such as Hansard, draft legislation, or media reports, beyond

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<sup>1</sup> Abbot, C., and Lee, M. 2021. Environmental Groups and Legal Expertise: Shaping the Brexit process. London: UCL Press. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781787358584>

what was necessary for understanding material arising from the desk review or interviews. In mitigation, the seniority and expertise of interviewees provided deep insights into the external context, and the evaluators also brought their own background knowledge of policy influencing and the climate and environmental fields.

The list of interviewees was significantly shaped by Greener UK staff. In theory they could have chosen to exclude voices more likely to be critical, but there was good evidence that this did not happen, as some robust critiques were encountered within a generally very positive picture. The evaluators also had freedom to contact additional interviewees not listed by Greener UK and the final sample sizes were good for this type of qualitative research.

# Context

The degree of political turbulence in the UK since the 2016 referendum is well recognised, and several interviewees emphasised this theme of political volatility. During the past six years of Greener UK's operation, there have been at least four markedly different UK political contexts, each with its own ideological, policy and parliamentary dynamics:

- the May majority government, initial Brexit positioning and triggering of Article 50
- the May minority government, the Withdrawal Act and the 'meaningful votes'
- the Johnson majority government, the Agreement, Transitional Period and Brexit
- the super-volatility of late 2022, from Johnson's departure, through Truss' short-lived premiership, and to Rishi Sunak's administration.

The political volatility and uncertainty of this period goes far beyond the normal general election cycle and included several changes of Prime Minister, parliamentary procedural innovations and mass ministerial resignations. Labour as the main UK opposition party also experienced a period of significant changes in these years, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and then Kier Starmer.

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted normal government and parliamentary business and ways of working for all organisations, with Greener UK no exception.

Finally, Brexit itself was (and to an extent still is) a very divisive issue amongst the public as well as the defining political issue of the period. For a fuller picture of events, see the timeline in Appendix 1 and graphic in Appendix 2.

This briefly summarised context was not without opportunities, as discussed below, but nevertheless was often extremely challenging for Greener UK's work, making it particularly difficult to plan ahead with any certainty, and requiring constant awareness to navigate successfully - strategically, organisationally and at the personal level.

Even during the process of the evaluation itself, the context evolved rapidly. A series of proposals under the Truss government, which became known as the #AttackOnNature, were a matter of future speculation at the time of the

internal stakeholder interviews, became emerging government policy at the time of the external stakeholder interviews, and now at the time of writing have been partly retracted but with considerable ongoing uncertainty.

Currently, the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill currently at report stage in the House of Commons puts at risk – and ministers’ discretion – many laws and regulations at the heart of environmental protection. While this evaluation can, with a high degree of confidence, describe the influence of Greener UK in its work to date and the factors which enabled it, the true impact over the long-term will depend on ongoing efforts and events.



# Findings

There was an unusually strong consensus from the interviews as to what Greener UK has achieved and why. There was more of a range of views on how that impact relates to the wider context, and what lessons should be drawn from the experience.

## Influence over legislation

There was clear evidence from the desk review and interviews that Greener UK has had direct and significant influence on a number of important pieces of legislation, in particular the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, the Environment Act 2021, the Agriculture Act 2020 and the Fisheries Act 2020. While exact attribution of influence over legislation is always difficult, and success often has many parents, interviewees pointed to examples of Greener UK evidence, lines and amendments making their way into parliamentary debates, select committee reports and final legislation. More specifically, there was agreement that Greener UK:

- was instrumental in the development of Section 16 of the EU (Withdrawal) Act, which required the publication of a draft environment bill that included fundamental environmental principles and an oversight body that can take action against the government; influencing such a high-profile and politically salient piece of legislation was a particularly notable success for the coalition, and one that no other civil society sector achieved.
- had significant influence over the development of the Environment Bill, including key environmental principles, targets, and the development and design of what became the Office for Environmental Protection, including notably the extension of its remit to include Northern Ireland, inclusion of climate change within its area of responsibility, and the consultative approach of the new oversight body.
- with others, notably Wildlife and Countryside Link, Greener UK successfully advocated for the principle of 'public money for public goods' in the Agriculture Act.

Other interviewees stressed the overall role and holistic influence of Greener UK across the period, or its success in helping to get environment 'on the agenda' in the Brexit process. Some interviewees felt that these legislative

wins needed to be put in the context of an overall deterioration of environmental protection as a result of Brexit.

*“The biggest win, where you can see a clear GUK hand in it, and led to real world change, was right at the beginning, getting section 16 of the Withdrawal Act, including various guarantees about environmental protection”* Internal stakeholder

## Movement building

While the most visible impacts of Greener UK are on policy and legislation, the evaluation also found strong evidence of the benefits of the coalition in terms of the environmental movement. These include:

- Stronger relationships and greater trust between CEOs and senior staff from different core partner organisations
- Stronger cross-border (intra-UK) links and understanding, including for individuals and organisations who have not previously made such connections
- Improved connections between Greener UK / Green Alliance, core partners and NGOs or civil society networks in related but distinct fields, such as trade
- Respect and trust of Greener UK and its staff, from parliamentarians, officials, media and other external stakeholders.

All of these relationships have taken time and care to cultivate. ‘Constant gardening’ is required to sustain such relationships, and to renew them as people and the positions they hold change over time. This is explored in more detail in the reflections later in this report.

## Success factors

### External

Greener UK has had influence and success across all four political periods mentioned above. The context for this work has never been simple, and it has often been hostile. However, there were two particular external factors that assisted Greener UK’s work in a crucial period between the 2017 to the 2019

general elections. The most important of these, mentioned by numerous interviewees, was the role of Michael Gove as Secretary of State at Defra during this period. Gove brought political clout, a desire to make a mark on the department, and an openness to engaging with Greener UK and the environmental sector more generally. While interviewees differ to some extent on their political analysis of Gove's actions, there is wide agreement on his significance in relation to Greener UK's goals and impact.

Also during this same period, the minority nature of the May government opened up additional scope for influence through parliament. Greener UK successfully worked with parliamentarians across both Houses, but under successive Conservative governments the role of sympathetic Conservative backbenchers was particularly important.

More generally, there is no doubt that the scale, seriousness and complexity of the threats that Brexit presented for UK environmental protection also helped to focus the minds and resources of the partner NGOs and funders.

## Internal

There were a number of interrelated internal factors which contributed to the success of Greener UK.

The particular **coalition model** seems generally to have worked very well. Hosting the initiative within an existing organisation was pragmatic and efficient. The coalition had its own staff capacity (alongside partner staff time) which was vital for a coherent approach, cultivating relationships and driving progress. The level of buy-in and involvement from CEOs and senior leadership teams though the Board helped ensure the legitimacy of decisions, and provided credibility with internal and external audiences that Greener UK did speak for the sector. The structure of a core group plus working groups allowed the coalition to remain reasonably nimble, but also to draw in and benefit from additional subject expertise from specialist NGOs, advisors and academics. Crucially, while it was an ongoing area of negotiation, in general the core staff were given greater delegated autonomy than is usual in coalition, enabling them to remain nimble in a fast-moving context, seizing opportunities when they arose. Finally, there was generally a good degree of internal discipline, with - for example - partners agreeing to and backing a short list of amendments when legislation was passing through parliament. Further reflections on some of these elements are given below.

*"...the ability to present a unified voice is fantastic and very powerful"*  
External stakeholder

*"It is rare to have this level of coordinated input from NGOs"* External stakeholder

While some of these elements were built into the structure of the coalition, they were only made to work by patiently investing in relationships, between the staff team and partners, within the Board, and with wider supporters. From the inside, it took time to establish trust, and could still take significant time to reach unity on key decisions; however, from the outside the coalition appeared to be acting as one – “the wiring was not visible”.

*“Greener UK has been one of the best and strongest NGO coalitions I have been part of”* Internal stakeholder

The quality of the staff team was repeatedly mentioned by both internal and external stakeholders as having been crucial to the success of Greener UK. Structurally, Greener UK benefitted from the coalition having its own team of staff, with specialist expertise on political analysis and strategy, parliamentary influencing, media and communications. Above and beyond this, Greener UK has benefitted from the particular skills and qualities of the individuals who have filled these roles. Phrases such as ‘political nous’, ‘on the ball’, ‘really understanding how parliament works’ and ‘professional and trusted’ were used. Many external stakeholders closely associated Greener UK with its staff.

The technical quality and timeliness of Greener UK’s briefings and papers were also frequently mentioned. Greener UK materials were based on sound evidence and subject expertise, often including strong legal input. This was particularly influential at a time when officials themselves were struggling with the volume and complexity of issues. In addition, while Greener UK had clear aims to advance environmental protection, its advocacy was not driven by the need to win headlines or publicity for the cause. Parliamentarians and officials felt able to rely on Greener UK material, and as a result the material was frequently quoted and used.

## Challenges

### Positioning

Greener UK positioned itself from the start and throughout as Brexit neutral. There were both principled and pragmatic arguments for this stance, heard in interviews or seen in documentation:

- Respect for the outcome of the 2016 referendum (52% to 48% in favour of the UK leaving the EU).
- Greener UK needed to influence the government of the day, which was committed to Brexit, and its credibility and access would have been severely compromised had it been overtly or implicitly opposing Brexit.
- Some Greener UK partners themselves had firmly neutral positions in relation to Brexit, reflecting the diversity of views amongst their members and / or caution around the appropriateness of a charity taking a side on this highly politicised issue.

This assumption of Brexit neutrality was tested at several points, with active discussions at Board level. In particular, the potential of the UK exiting on a 'no deal' basis took up a lot of energy, considering whether it was appropriate to maintain a neutral stance on this – unlikely but still very divisive – scenario, and how to prepare for such a drastic outcome.

*“Trying to influence the horrific Brexit juggernaut was the most difficult thing politically”.* Internal stakeholder.

There was general agreement amongst internal stakeholders that Greener UK (and the environmental sector more generally) could never have stopped Brexit, and that its neutral position helped Greener UK to have the influence that it did, for example on Defra thinking and resulting legislation. However, several interviewees did wonder whether Greener UK, or some of its members, could have been more outspoken on the threats of Brexit to environmental protection, or the potential benefits of a 'soft Brexit'.

*“I would have liked the coalition to bubble away a bit more with some angrier voices. ... not sure it would have made much difference to results. Maybe would have made more difference to our voice as a movement.”* Internal stakeholder

One of the most critical views heard in the evaluation was that Greener UK had been somewhat politically naïve, and that Michael Gove had used environmental cover to help maintain a narrative of a positive Brexit, while the overall impact of Brexit is detrimental to environmental aims.

Others presented a very different view, that Greener UK had effectively used Gove's political clout and his desire to "shake things up" to get quite significant legislative wins in an extremely noisy and largely hostile political context. There was also a view that legislative commitments won on environmental matters helped to support a wider frame of a high standards UK post-Brexit. However, almost all interviewees expressed concerns about legislative success being undermined by patchy implementation and more overtly by changes in government policy under changing ministerial and prime ministerial leadership. The ongoing uncertainty of UK environmental policy is discussed further below.

While on Brexit neutrality there was a degree of choice, Greener UK as a coalition primarily of charities and using primarily charitable funds, is legally required not to take a party-political stance, though they can legitimately seek to engage and influence politicians (in government and opposition) and policy in furtherance of their charity aims. Greener UK seems to have navigated these requirements well, with a range of views from stakeholders about the relative closeness of the coalition to Conservative and Labour for example, and no suggestion that Greener UK ever compromised its independence.

## Devolution

Greener UK recognised from early on that devolution mattered – particularly in terms of how Brexit was implemented – and efforts were made to work across the whole UK, particularly by staff. However, none of the Board members' HQs were based outside England, and Board engagement with devolution as a strategic challenge and opportunity was limited. For example, the Board did not have a substantive discussion on Northern Ireland until January 2019. There was a tendency for devolved matters to slip down the list of priorities.

Many environmental NGOs, including Greener UK partners, either cover only some of the UK jurisdictions, or are nominally UK-wide but without policy capacity across different jurisdictions (RSPB is a rare exception to this). This can make true UK-wide civil society working and collaboration a challenge, particularly on policy.

*"... it has developed its understanding of devolution and has adapted its approach to be more appropriate to the real UK. However, in its very early days so London / UK government centric, that it appeared and sometime was insensitive in its early approaches"* Internal stakeholder

Whilst interviewees were on balance positive (and sometimes very positive) about Greener UK's cross-border working, there were some points of tension – for example, the Greener UK name was not very helpful in either Scotland or

Northern Ireland, where significant sections of the public have either loose affinity or active dislike of the current UK constitutional arrangements. Interestingly, England-based stakeholders tended to see such difficulties as relating to personality or management of expectations, while those in devolved jurisdictions regarded the issues as more structural. It was commonly felt that relationships had improved with investment of time and care.

*“They have succeeded in showing of knowledge [of our jurisdiction] – supported by a [local] organisation. They have done much better than most in that”* External stakeholder

Greener UK has been particularly helpful in Northern Ireland, for example helping ensure that the Office for Environmental Protection covers Northern Ireland, and making links between Westminster and Stormont advocacy. Greener UK has also directly and indirectly supported advocacy in Wales, which has been welcome. The environment sector in Wales is small, particularly in terms of policy capacity, and the Welsh government has been particularly slow to implement commitments. Outside this evaluation, there is evidence that charities have more opportunities for influence in the devolved administrations<sup>2</sup>.

## Trade

One major consequence of Brexit is that UK trade policy, previously determined primarily at an EU level, is now decided nationally. Trade deals can significantly shape domestic policy, not only in terms of economic impacts, but also because of national commitments that are made as part of a deal. At the time of the referendum, UK environmental NGOs - and indeed UK civil society more generally - had very little expertise on trade. Neither the DExEU (the government’s Brexit department, now defunct) nor the Department for International Trade, leading on UK-EU and wider UK trade policy respectively, were welcoming to civil society input.

Interviewees agreed that Greener UK had been successful in recognising this issue, helping to skill up the sector and gaining some limited access, including securing representation on the Strategic Trade Advisory Group. After some initial difficulty, a good working relationship was established with the Trade Justice Movement, the main civil society campaign grouping on trade. Some Greener UK core members have also invested in developing internal capacity on trade.

However, interviewees also agreed that despite these positive steps, civil society currently has very little influence in this policy area, as demonstrated

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<sup>2</sup> <https://nfpsynergy.net/blog/political-engagement-devolved-after-covid-19>

by the Australian and New Zealand Trade Deals, passed with the minimum of parliamentary scrutiny and with worrying implications in terms of improving the environmental impact of farming.

*“Not a failure, but areas most disappointed is influencing trade side of things. No lack of effort ... relevant officials in Brexit dept and then Dept of Trade have not been inclined to engage with environmental stakeholders. Haven’t managed to break that reluctance through parliamentary scrutiny or other means”* Internal stakeholder.

## Public campaigning and communicating

Greener UK primary channels for influence were through advocacy - engaging ministers, parliamentarians and officials with expert analysis and argument. This process drew on the status of Greener UK partners, several of whom have the added credibility and political relevance of mass memberships. Greener UK also supported their core advocacy by securing media coverage and comment and – to a lesser extent – mobilising members of the public around Greener UK’s aims.

Over the four years from 2018 to 2021 inclusive, Greener UK logged 519 **media** articles into which it had had input (not all attribute a quote directly to Greener UK). Coverage is sustained (not limited to a few high-profile incidents) and is spread over traditional print titles, broadcast and specialist press. Greener UK achieved a particularly good political breadth in coverage; of the articles in leading titles, 29% were with ‘predominately right-wing’ titles, 27% with ‘predominately left-wing’ titles, and 44% with neutral or centrist platforms (categories building on YouGov polling of public perceptions)<sup>3</sup>. Mainstream coverage was weighted towards broadsheet<sup>4</sup> titles, which represented two-thirds of articles listed, with a little under 10% in the traditionally tabloid press.

The main public campaigning action of Greener UK, in conjunction with The Climate Coalition, was organising ‘The Time is Now’ mass lobby of parliament in July 2019. Many internal interviewees named this as amongst the highlights of Greener UK activity, while also noting that it was effectively a one off. An internal evaluation on file details a very successful event, with levels of participation by MPs and the public exceeding targets with many members of the public attending a lobby for the first time, positive comments on the quality of the event from both parliamentarians and public, extensive media

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<sup>3</sup> Building on <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2017/03/07/how-left-or-right-wing-are-uks-newspapers>

<sup>4</sup> Using [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_newspapers\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom#Broadsheet\\_and\\_former\\_broadsheet\\_newspapers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_newspapers_in_the_United_Kingdom#Broadsheet_and_former_broadsheet_newspapers)



coverage particularly in regional press, and some limited evidence of MPs altering their positions or taking action directly as a result of the lobby.

Another example of Greener UK campaigning with partners was the ‘pledge for the environment’, which was signed by over 180 MPs including Priti Patel, Dominic Raab and a significant number of non-CEN Conservatives. The pledge was important in establishing political salience of the environment early on in the Brexit process.

While Greener UK was not designed as a public campaign, and did have some success in the areas described above, a number of internal stakeholders did express some regret that Greener UK’s work did not have more of a public campaigning element and / or more reach with the public. Some felt that the overall tone of Greener UK’s work was too conciliatory, while others felt that some opportunities might have been missed to tap into the power of more emotive environmental flashpoints, such as sewage discharges or air pollution.

However, interviewees also recognised that joint public campaigning, which engages brands and membership, is always more sensitive than NGOs collaborating behind the scenes. There was some initial resistance amongst partners to Greener UK having any separate brand at all.

*“They have had good public profile ...they come across as balanced and authoritative but don’t mince their words; they have a tone as distinct from lots of NGOs with more traditional campaigning voices.”* External stakeholder

*“There was never a ‘chlorinated chicken’ moment”.* Internal stakeholder

## Operational aspects

### Green Alliance as host

The hosting arrangements at Green Alliance were generally seen as having worked reasonably well, and were not subject to significant comment. However, those interviewees who were closer to the coalition did provide some reflections. There was a recognition that Greener UK was a large project for Green Alliance to manage, and a gap between Green Alliance CEOs early on in the coalition's development caused some pressures, particularly for the Greener UK staff.

There was also recognition that the choice of Green Alliance as host organisation will have influenced the approach of the coalition. Much of this was positive, for example Green Alliance's existing policy expertise and relationships were a useful foundation for the work which Greener UK went on to do. A different host, for example a more campaign orientated NGO, would have shaped things differently, though not necessarily better. No-one suggested that Greener UK should have been established as a separate legal entity, and at least one interviewee expressed – unprompted – a strong view that that would have been a wasteful and unhelpful step.

Several interviewees noted a lack of clarity at times between Green Alliance and Greener UK, but no-one felt this had been a major problem.

### Board, working groups and partnerships

There were some different views on the role and success of the Greener UK board. One perspective was that relationships had been quite fractured and fragmented in the early days, prior to Shaun Spiers taking over as Green Alliance Chief Executive and Greener UK Board chair. A more systematic approach can certainly be seen in the papers from that point onwards. Another view (not necessarily incompatible) was that the board was a very important forum in the earlier phase of the coalition through which CEOs could have substantive debates on political context and strategy, but then over time it lost senior representation and became more focused on Greener UK organisational process. Later phases of Greener UK have consciously involved a lighter role for the Board, with a reduced frequency of meetings.

The working groups of Greener UK were widely seen as helpful (particularly as a means of bringing in active contributions and expertise from groups beyond the core membership) though also generally seen as having become too numerous and complex at times. Engagement with the wider list of supporting organisations beyond the working groups was relatively light touch, and the

status of such organisations was perhaps not as clear as it could have been, but again this does not seem to have been a serious problem.

Most interviewees mentioned the initially quite difficult relationship between Greener UK and Wildlife and Countryside Link. With the two networks having a number of members in common, and both naturally engaging with the consequence of Brexit, these problems could not be ignored. A lot of time was invested in improving this relationship, and there was generally agreement that this had been successful.

## Funding and costs

The core Greener UK budget over 5 years from August 2016 to July 2022 totalled £3.3m. Income was £326k in the first year, before rising to an average of £600k for each of the next four years, and then falling in the 2021 / 22 year as the coalition was scaled back. These figures do not include the significant in-kind contributions to the work of the coalition by partners, academics and others.

Of the funding for this central budget, around 25% was provided by NGO partners, with around 75% from eleven external charitable foundations. Of external donors, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the European Climate Foundation have provided the most extensive support, with the Children's Investment Fund Foundation also providing a very significant contribution in the coalition's second year.

In line with the evaluation brief, interviewees were asked about whether this level of spend was appropriate, and if it represented value for money. No-one suggested that Greener UK's resources had been excessive relative to the task, while a number noted that staff and others involved had worked exceptionally hard, and some described the project as under-resourced. Smaller NGO partners in particular welcomed the value to them in working in partnership with larger NGOs, who also provided the bulk of the cash contributions, and others noted that the coalition had been able to leverage in significant grant funds that might not have been secured by individual organisations.

Relative to other Green Alliance projects, and other environmental sector coalitions, Greener UK has been relatively well resourced. However, this has paid off: Greener UK's impact on policy and legislation has been significant and will help to shape the UK environment for years to come. Relative to the annual charitable spend of the partner organisations, of approximately £900m<sup>5</sup>, the annual Greener UK budget is small: only 0.06% of the total.

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<sup>5</sup> This comparison encompasses partner spend on operational management of nature reserves, heritage assets, fundraising, membership and so on, and in-house policy and influencing spend will be a relatively small element of the total.

It is difficult to assess Greener UK costs relative to other lobbying spend of other interest groups in the UK, because there is no statutory reporting, though one 2007 estimate by the Hansard Society was that industry as a whole is worth around £1.9bn annually, employing 14,000 people. At the EU level, where figures are easily available, the (UK) National Farmers Union spends around €650,000 per year on lobbying activities, and BP alone spends around €2.5m per year, to pick just two examples. In relation to these numbers, half a million pounds feels a relatively small annual sum to represent the UK environmental sector, particularly at such a pivotal time.

While the Greener UK Board did not have operational responsibilities for the project, it is still somewhat striking how rarely resourcing features within the Board minutes. On occasions when resourcing is mentioned, it is often a question of whether further in-kind assistance can be spared, rather than raising additional cash. Without wishing to diminish either the difficulties of fundraising or the contributions that partner organisations did make to the project, it is surprising not to see more prominent attention and leadership on the mobilisation of resources.

# Conclusions

In the judgement of the evaluators, those involved in Greener UK should be proud of what it has achieved. The comments from both internal and external interviews, corroborated by desk research and our own knowledge of the field, were – in the main – overwhelmingly positive. It is rare to encounter such a consistent, high level of praise.

The picture is of course not perfect. None of the legislation that Greener UK influenced included all the elements that the sector would have hoped. More pessimistic interviewees felt that success in this context was mainly about ameliorating or avoiding the worst scenarios. There were, from a minority, some thoughtful critiques of Greener UK's overall positioning, and more generally, there was a recognition that policy advocacy is only one route to creating and maintaining change. Recent events in government have increased concern that progress may be undermined by poor implementation, or rolled back by shifts in policy.

Overall, we can conclude that Greener UK:

- Is a powerful example of strong sector collaboration having very significant influence, particularly on key environmental legislation
- Has provided additional benefits of working together – including learning, pooling expertise, new relationships, greater trust
- Was well positioned for influence over legislation and policy, and played a smaller role in public campaigning
- Has had successes and struggles in working across the four jurisdictions of the UK
- Shows the importance of coalitions being sufficiently resourced, bringing parliamentary and technical expertise, and being trusted with sufficient autonomy and flexibility.
- Demonstrated value for money

Looking forward, we would highlight that:

- Recent events have underlined that the political context you work in will continue to change at pace, with potential for significant regress.
- Brexit is a continuing process without end date, which continues to directly impact on UK law and policy.

- The shape of environmental governance and regulation is now set across the UK and its four jurisdictions, meaning that the environmental sector will need to increase its policy muscle.
- There is significant further work to be done to shape the public and political agenda, as well as to shape and respond to the policy and legislative one.

*“We are going to be looking at these laws and trying to reform them for many years to come. There is such little trust and little technical understanding that the policy expertise and convening power would be hugely valuable in an on-going basis”.* External stakeholder

# Recommendations

The time and resource investment required for effective collaboration is intense: Greener UK reached the point where impact exceeds effort quicker than most. It will be important for any future arrangements to build on what has been achieved; if not, the risk is that any new collaboration will have to invest substantially again to get to the point of maturity that Greener UK has now reached.



In light of the evaluation findings, and recognising that a decision has been taken to close Greener UK at the end of 2023, this report makes the following recommendations to Green Alliance and the leadership of the Greener UK partner organisations.

## Stewardship of assets

- Greener UK and its staff have developed trusted relationships with officials, parliamentarians, journalists and others. There should be active planning on how these relationships can, as far as possible, be authentically maintained and nurtured within the sector after the closure of Greener UK.

- Greener UK in its staff and working groups have developed considerable experience and expertise of successful influencing across a range of issues. Efforts should be made to capture and share this learning within the sector.
- The lessons from the Greener UK collaboration model should be considered when future collaborations are being developed.

### Future influencing

- A resourced, skilled, trusted common platform for Westminster Bill influencing is invaluable, and the environmental sector needs this as a standing resource or a model that is ready to activate. A single platform is cost effective and influential. Future plans for this, beyond Greener UK, should be made now.
- Thought should also be given to the mechanisms by which the sector can continue to effectively influence the UK government through behind-the-scenes lobbying, given the clear message that the government's capacity and appetite to engage with multiple partners is limited.
- Opportunities should be sought to make stronger links between policy influencing and more public focused campaigning across the sector, recognising that a range of tools are needed to shape as well as respond to developments, and that co-ordination does not necessarily require a single joint position.

### Future collaboration

- The sector needs a trusted and purposeful space for CEOs to constructively discuss the most important political developments of the day, to share intelligence, and determine ways forward. This network needs the capacity and resources to be able to anticipate and proactively shape developments, not merely respond reactively, and there should be strong links from this network into delivery mechanisms.
- Greener UK has also fostered trusted relationships and learning across different organisations at all levels, and these valuable assets should not be lost. Opportunities should be sought for continued cross-organisational working, recognising the value of investing in these links.



The following recommendations are for the environmental sector as a whole:

- environmental NGOs and funders urgently need to invest more in policy, legal and parliamentary capacity, recognising that environmental policy, now decided at UK and devolved levels, is much less certain and more open to influence (for good and bad).
- environmental NGOs and funders should invest in a sustained and respectful way in building stronger intra-UK jurisdiction relationships and structures.
- the environmental NGO sector needs to be open to new actors and to make active invitations to new players and experts to keep the work relevant and rooted in diverse expertise.

## Appendix 1: Timeline

Date	External events	Greener UK delivery	Greener UK organisational
June 2016	EU referendum result. Cameron announces resignation.		
July 2016	May confirmed as PM		
September 2016			Matthew Spencer leaves Green Alliance; Leah Davis Acting ED.  First Greener UK board meeting
January 2017	Northern Ireland Executive collapses		
February 2017	Brexit white paper published	Manifesto launched  Greener UK parliamentary reception	
March 2017	HMG triggers Article 50		
June 2017	Queen's Speech announced new legislation for fisheries, agriculture & trade		

June 2017	<p>General election. C minority gov.</p> <p>Michael Gove takes over as SoS at Defra</p>	Risk Tracker 1 (June 2016-June 2017) published assessing the following policy areas: air pollution, chemicals, water, waste & resource, fisheries, climate & energy, farming & land use and nature protection	Shaun Spiers takes up post as Green Alliance Executive Director.
July 2017 – June 2018	July: Withdrawal Bill first reading	Worked on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill	
August 2017		First public briefing published on the risk of a governance gap in environmental law after Brexit	
September 2017	Withdrawal Bill second reading	Risk Tracker 2 (July 2017-Sept 2017) published	
October 2017	Blue Planet shown on BBC		
November 2017	Gove article committing to statutory env watchdog, and env principles		
January 2018 – March 2019	January: Withdrawal Bill Commons 3 <sup>rd</sup> reading, Lords 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> reading	Worked on the 2017-19 Trade Bill	
January 2018	25 Year Plan to improve the environment published	Risk Tracker 3 (Oct 2017-Jan 2018) published	
April 2018		Risk Tracker 4 (Feb 2018-April 2018) published	Tamsin Cooper steps down as GA strategy director; later joins Defra

April 2018 – November 2020		Worked on the Fisheries Bill	
June 2018 – November 2020		Worked on the Agriculture Bill	
May 2018	Defra consultation on Environmental Principles and Governance		
June 2018	European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 passed		
July 2018	Government announced an Environment Bill	Risk Tracker 5 published (May 2018- July 2018)	
October 2018		Green Benchmarks for Brexit published.	
November 2018	Brexit Withdrawal Agreement published	Risk Tracker 6 published (August 2018-Nov 2018)	
December 2018	May wins confidence vote  Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill published.		
January 2019	First 'meaningful vote' lost		
February 2019		Risk Tracker 7 published (Dec 2018- Feb 2019)	
March 2019	Second and third 'meaningful votes' lost  Brexit due and postponed		

April 2019	XR first wave  EAC and EFRA Committees publish their reports on the draft EPG bill, incorporating several of Greener UK's recommendations		
May 2019	May announces resignation		
June 2019	HMG commits to 2050 Net Zero	Greener UK and The Climate Coalition run The Time Is Now lobby of Parliament, with 12,000 people  Risk Tracker 8 published (March 2019-June 2019)	
July 2019	May leaves office, Johnson PM.  Theresa Villiers replaces Michael Gove at Defra		
September 2019		Risk Tracker 9 published (June 2019-Sept 2019)	Amy Mount leaves Greener UK and joins Defra.
October 2019	Environment Bill included in Queen's Speech (14 October)  Govt responds to EFRA and EAC reports and accepts key recommendations eg on the OEP and targets  Adjusted terms of withdrawal agreed between UK government and EU  Further Brexit extension	Briefing published assessing the environmental implications of the new Withdrawal Agreement	
November 2019			Sarah Williams joins as Head of Unit.

December 2019 – January 2020	<p>General election (C, 80 majority)</p> <p>First news of Covid-19</p> <p>Environment Bill included in Queen’s Speech (19 December)</p>	<p>Worked on the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill</p>	
January 2020	<p>Environment bill first reading</p> <p>UK leaves EU and enters transition period</p> <p>NI Executive restored</p>		
February 2020	<p>George Eustice new SoS at Defra</p>		
March 2020	<p>A new trade bill is introduced to Parliament’s 2019-21 session</p> <p>First Covid restrictions</p>		
April 2020	<p>Starmer confirmed as Labour leader</p>		
June 2020		<p>Risk Tracker 10 published (Oct 2019- June 2020)</p>	
September – December 2020		<p>Worked on the UK Internal Market Bill</p>	
November 2020	<p>Fisheries Act 2020 and Agriculture Act 2020 achieved Royal Assent.</p> <p>Biden elected</p>		

December 2020	<p>UK Internal Market Act 2020 achieves Royal Assent.</p> <p>End of Brexit transition period</p>	Initial analysis of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement published	
March 2021		Final Risk Tracker published (June 2016-March 2021)	
April 2021	Trade Act 2021 achieved Royal Assent		
May 2021	<p>Environment Bill included in Queen's Speech (11 May) and returned to Parliament for session 2021-22 at the House of Commons report stage</p> <p>Scottish and Welsh Parliament elections.</p>		
November 2021	Environment Act 2021 achieved Royal Assent		
November 2021 – present		Work moves to ensuring the Environment Act is properly implemented, including supporting and scrutinising the establishment of the Office for Environmental Protection (see Greener UK and Wildlife and Countryside Link's briefing on the OEP's draft strategy and enforcement policy)	
December 2021	UK – Australia Free Trade Agreement signed		
January 2022	Office for Environmental Protection legally vested		

February 2022	<p>NI Executive collapses again</p> <p>NI Assembly approves the OEP in NI</p>		
May 2022	NI Assembly elections		Green Alliance appoints new Senior Policy Advisor on Trade
July 2022	Johnson announces resignation. Leadership race begins.		
September 2022	<p>Johnson replaced by Truss as PM.</p> <p>Ranil Jayawardena new SoS at Defra.</p>		
October 2022	Truss resigns. Sunak becomes PM.		



## Appendix 2: Six years of political change in the UK

