

Press Release 12th February 2025: Communities, Climate and Devolution

Communities Urge English Devolution Legislation to Prioritise Climate and Nature

A group of 13 climate networks from across England, representing hundreds of community groups, have written to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Angela Rayner, calling on her to create a legal duty on the new Strategic Authorities to plan for climate and nature. They say that the proposals do not give enough priority to the climate and nature challenges that we face.

The government's devolution proposals "Power and Partnership, Foundations for Growth" would see the creation of Strategic Authorities across England each covering a large geographical area with at least 1.5 million people. Alongside this, the existing system of district and county councils would be replaced by single-tier unitary authorities covering around 0.5 million people.

Current proposals give the new authorities a duty to plan for growth and infrastructure, but the signatories argue that they also need a duty to plan for the environment. Planning to reduce emissions and restore nature should be as central to the role of Strategic Authorities as the economy, housing and transport.

"The new Strategic Authorities will have responsibility, sooner or later, for all the building blocks for stopping runaway global heating - energy, economy, transport, housebuilding and improvement. So it's essential that they are given both the responsibility and the money to use these building blocks to create a climate-friendly future," said Hampshire Climate Action Network chair Chris Holloway.

"Community groups all around the country recognise the severity and threat of the climate and nature crises," added South East Climate Alliance campaigner Sally Barnard. "We are trying to play our part in restoring nature and cutting emissions in our home villages and towns, but look to our local authorities for leadership. Without statutory duties, the new Strategic Authorities will not have the mandate, resources and accountability they need to meet the scale of the challenge."

The networks signing the letter bring together hundreds of community, environment and faith groups, all working for climate and nature in their area. They include: the South East Climate Alliance; Bedfordshire Climate Change Forum; Bristol Climate and Nature Partnership; Dorset Climate Action Network; Climate Action Network West Midlands; Cumbria Sustainability Network; Hampshire Climate Action Network; Leeds Climate Action; Oxfordshire Climate Action Network; South Yorkshire Climate Alliance; Surrey Climate Commission; Wiltshire Climate Alliance and Climate Emergency UK.

For more information, contact: Chris Holloway, Chair, Hampshire Climate Action Network, hcan@winacc.org.uk, 07779 283451.

The English Devolution White Paper: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>

A copy of our letter to the Secretary of State is attached