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UK political parties fall short of The Green Standard

For the first time, the UK's nine leading environmental organisations¹, representing over five million supporters, have published a definitive assessment of the three main political parties' green credentials.

With the start of the party conference season just days away, the report, *How green are our parties? The Green Standard report*, finds that none of the parties have yet implemented policy commitments and action on the scale required to meet the range and urgency of the environmental threats we face.

The assessment is based on The Green Standard², a set of six robust environmental leadership tests developed by the NGOs in February. The report uses a 'traffic light system':

- Green to indicate support for both ambition and commitments
- Amber to indicate a mixed picture in relation to ambition and commitments
- Red to indicate where we are concerned by both the effect of a party's approach and a lack of positive commitments.

With no 'green lights', the gap between Conservative aspirations on the environment and their limited policy commitments is stark. The Labour government, despite displaying international leadership on climate change, is failing on its renewables and emissions targets and has failed to commit to implementing a Marine Bill and receives just one green light. The Liberal Democrats get three green lights by offering the strongest set of policies on climate change, green taxation and green living. All three parties, however, have failed to give sufficient attention to policies that will protect and enhance our countryside and wildlife.

Stephen Hale, Director of Green Alliance, said on behalf of the groups:

"It is very disappointing that none of the three main parties are yet providing the leadership and action we need. The environmental ambitions of the parties are very welcome but all three must close the gap between rhetoric and delivery in the run-up to the next general election."

Hale continued:

“The Liberal Democrats deserve praise for their approach to climate change. But, like other parties, they have neglected the countryside and wildlife agenda. The challenge for David Cameron is particularly acute, given diverging views in his own party. But the noises emanating from the Conservative Quality of Life Commission, and the Liberal Democrat proposals to make the UK carbon neutral by 2050, do appear to be examples of what is required from the opposition - and from Gordon Brown’s government.”

The report scores the parties on their record since the 2005 General Election and provides a benchmark for future assessments.

Polling indicates the public is demanding more from their elected representatives. For example, in a recent MORI poll 70 per cent agreed the government should take the lead in combating climate change, even if it means using the law to change people's behaviour³; and in a separate government survey, of the issues people think government should be dealing with, the environment was the fourth most commonly mentioned behind crime, health and education⁴.

Hale added:

“Despite demands from business and the voting public, the environmental beauty contest between the parties has, to date, been characterised by too much spin - and too little substance. The Green Standard tests can be met but our political leaders must show greater courage and commitment.”

Ends

Editor’s notes

1. You can download the report at <http://www.thegreenstandard.org.uk>
2. This initiative is supported by CPRE, Friends of the Earth, Green Alliance, Greenpeace, National Trust, RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust and WWF-UK.
3. The Green Standard tests are:
 - **UK action on climate change** - Achieve reductions in UK carbon dioxide emissions of at least three per cent year on year, en route to a low carbon economy based on energy efficiency, renewable sources of energy and decentralised energy.
 - **International action on climate change** - Provide international leadership to restrict global temperature rises to 2°C and ensure worldwide emissions are falling by 2015.
 - **Green living** - Make it cheaper and easier for individuals to reduce their environmental impact through tax, regulation, information and other powers of government.

- **Natural environment** - Protect and enhance the beauty, accessibility and wildlife of the environment in our countryside, towns and seas through incentives, regulation, investment and other powers of government.
 - **Planning** - Value, support and develop our planning system as a democratic tool for protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment of our countryside and towns.
 - **Environmental tax and subsidies** - Green the tax system by increasing the amount of revenue from taxes that reduce environmental damage, and eliminate environmentally perverse subsidies.
4. Climate change survey conducted by Ipsos MORI in July 2007 to feed into their report *Tipping Point or Turning Point?* <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/2007/climatechange.shtml>
 5. *2007 Survey of Public Attitudes and Behaviours toward the environment* (August 2007) conducted on behalf of Defra by the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB). <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2007/070814a.htm>
 6. The Climate Clinic will, for the second year running, be at the three main political party conferences. Its aim is to push for real political action to tackle climate change by mobilising the UK's most influential scientists, politicians, industry leaders and environmental campaigners. The Climate Clinic is a coalition of 30+ of the UK's leading environmental groups, trade bodies and professional societies representing over six million members. For more details visit www.climateclinic.org.uk

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