

briefing

European Parliamentary Labour Party

What do Labour MEPs do to protect the environment?

Labour in Europe works to protect our environment. Our commitment to tackling climate change and securing sustainable energy sources has ensured that climate change is now a strategic objective of the European Union. We are also building towards a new Energy Charter, which will empower EU institutions to adopt laws affecting the internal energy market promoting energy efficiency and security of supply. It is vital that global challenges such as climate change and energy security should be met with co-ordinated international action. From Kyoto to Bali, the EU has led the world in proposing an ambitious programme of action, and within the European Parliament, Labour MEPs have been at the forefront of such efforts.

Key areas where Labour MEPs have worked to protect our environment:

The European Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) is the cornerstone of the EU's fight against climate change and provides economic incentives for industries that pollute to achieve reductions in their emissions. This 'cap and trade' system has been in place since 2005 and we have called for reforms to strengthen and expand the system to reach the higher target of a 30% reduction in emissions. Labour MEPs and their colleagues in the Socialist Group will ensure that we can deliver at the European level the ambitious results that are necessary.

The European Union has set a target of producing 20% of our energy from renewable sources by 2020. The UK is committed to reaching the required target by using a combination of wind

and tidal energy industries along with the use of biofuels, if it can be shown that these are produced in an ecological and socially responsible way:

Labour MEPs are at the fore of the biofuels debate urging a responsible approach to the use of biofuels. Labour MEPs urged caution and voted for an 'emergency brake' mechanism, if biofuels cause major increases in food prices.

Labour MEPs believe that there are many different types of biofuels, some 'good', some 'bad'. With EPLP support the EU is leading the world in putting in place strict criteria to ensure only 'good' biofuels, which deliver real emission reductions and don't increase food prices, are used in the EU.

Labour MEPs have voted for sustainability criteria to be strengthened and called for only those biofuels which decrease greenhouse gas emissions by at least 45-60% to be allowed. This effectively means that Biofuels which cause the destruction of rainforests, wetlands or peatlands, or do not adhere to strict social criteria, should not be allowed.

Renewable energy sources and energy efficiency are the long-term solutions, however immediate measures are necessary to limit the impact of today's reality. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) is the process by which CO₂ is separated from the other gases produced by power plants, compressed and then stored in geological formations. Labour MEPs are pushing for rules to ensure that CCS technology can be made available in a way that ensures strong safety conditions and rules on state subsidies. However with our Socialist colleagues we will be working to ensure that the use of CCS does not discourage the switch to renewables and increased energy efficiency measures.

The EU's Waste Framework Directive tackles the 38.2kg of CO₂ of waste which we produce in our homes each week. The annual amount of waste produced in the UK is 434 million tonnes and yet we currently recycle only 31% of municipal waste. Labour MEPs had fought for binding recycling and reuse targets to be achieved by 2020. Our new targets will see us work towards the recycling or reuse of 50% of household waste and 70% of construction and demolition waste.



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Labour MEPs and the environment...

The climate change deniers

The Labour fight against climate change stands in contrast to the positions repeatedly taken by some Tory MEPs. Tory MEPs have voted to weaken European Commission proposals to limit CO2 emissions from cars. In May 2008 Tory MEPs Roger Helmer and Philip Bradbourn even teamed up with UKIP MEPs Graham Booth, Ashley Mote and former UKIP MEP Tom Wise to join the dwindling ranks of climate change deniers to vote against a European Parliament resolution, which outlined the scientific facts of climate change. Labour

MEP Linda McAvan commented that such irresponsible positions saw the Tory MEPs "jeopardising the future of our planet". Helmer himself claimed that the "climate change consensus is a journalistic fiction".

Another Tory MEP, Caroline Jackson is a former Chair of the Environment Committee in the European Parliament and well respected for her expert knowledge. However, she says of David Cameron that "I think from the point of view of the Conservative Party pursuing the green line is all talk and no action at

the moment...when push comes to shove in the next general election I suspect we will roll back from some of this".

When it comes to protecting the planet, Labour MEPs are at the fore, leading the European Union to become an Environmental Union. We believe that acting at home is important, but we will only be successful if we act together with other European countries to protect this planet's long term future.



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