

# LGA submission to the [Consultation](#) on the draft [policy statement on environmental principles](#)

2 June 2021



## 1. About the Local Government Association (LGA)

- 1.1. The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We are a politically-led, cross party membership organisation, representing councils from England and Wales.
- 1.2. Our role is to support, promote and improve local government, and raise national awareness of the work of councils. Our ultimate ambition is to support councils to deliver local solutions to national problems.

## 2. Summary

- 2.1. The LGA welcomes and supports the government's ambition set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan for this to be the first generation that leaves the environment in a better state than that in which we inherited it. We also welcome and support the ambition to create a new, world-leading, statutory and independent environmental watchdog to hold government to account on our environmental ambitions and obligations.
- 2.2. The LGA welcomes government's commitment to consider the five internationally recognised environmental principles when making policy:
  - an integration principle
  - a prevention principle
  - rectification at source
  - polluter pays principle
  - precautionary principle.
- 2.3. It is essential that these five principles are considered when policy is made across all government departments if government is to achieve its aim.
- 2.4. However, given Governments statutory commitment to net zero by 2050, the LGA does not consider the five environmental principles sufficient to address the changes needed to tackle the climate emergency. Government should include a further principle that supports the delivery of the targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as required under the Climate Change Act 2008.
- 2.5. In omitting heritage from the Environment Bill, there is a significant risk that future Environmental Improvement Plans will be undertaken without consideration of the historic environment and sites valued as heritage landscapes. If the whole of the environment – both natural and historic – is not fully appreciated then there is a significant risk of irreparable damage caused to an irreplaceable resource and will not, ultimately, achieve the goal of leaving the environment in a better state than we found it.

## 3. Answers to the questions

# Submission

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**Question 1-4 are answered above**

**Question 5. Do you think the overview section provides an adequate foundation for policy makers to apply the environmental principles in policy-making?**

The overview section introduces the five environmental principles and the intended impact of the policy statement, but it does not set out what is expected of having 'due regard'. The inclusion of a definition of having 'due regard' to this statement when making policy should be considered.

It is proposed that policy on taxation, spending or the allocation of resources within government would be exempt from the duty to apply the policy statement. Taxation can have a significant impact on the environment both positive and negative and therefore we would suggest this exemption is given further consideration

**Question 6. Do you think step one allows policy-makers to correctly assess the potential environmental effects of their policy?**

**Question 7. Do you think step one ensures that policy-making will address the most important environmental impacts?**

Step one sets out a broad approach to assessing the potential environmental effects of their policy, but it doesn't establish a method by which the approach should be taken. Calculating the potential environmental impact of policy can be technical, and a skill set not all policy makers may have.

There also needs to be a level of consistency in applying the policy statement across government departments. Inconsistent application not only weakens the policy statement but also the objective.

**Question 8. Will step two assist policy-makers in selecting the appropriate environmental principles?**

Step two goes some way to assist policy makers in selecting the appropriate environmental principles but leaves much judgement up to the policy maker. Step two would benefit from practical guidance including several examples where a less obvious environmental impact could occur in the development of policy.

**Question 9. Do you think step three provide a robust and sufficient framework for the application of each individual environmental principle?**

**a. Integration b. Prevention c. Rectification d. Polluter pays e. Precautionary**

The steps set out for each of the principles go some way to provide a robust and sufficient framework. However, in the absence of any independent or expert assessment of the likely environmental impacts of a policy it isn't possible to say with confidence that the framework will achieve the desired aims.

**Question 10. Do you think the process for applying the policy statement (the three steps) provides a robust and sufficient framework for the application of the environmental principles as a whole?**

Yes, however consistent application to policy making across government is a risk.

Government should consider setting up a team to work across Whitehall to ensure the policy statement is applied consistently, robustly and fairly to all policy making.