

Manifesto for Environmental Health General Election 2019



The Case for Environmental Health

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) is the professional voice for environmental health representing over 7,000 members across the UK working in the public, private and third sectors. This election, we are calling on political parties, and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates, to recognise the vital role environmental health plays in all our lives.

Environmental health has an important and unique contribution to make to improving public health, reducing health inequalities, and protecting our environment. From tackling air quality, fighting for better housing conditions, and making sure the food we eat is safe, environmental health professionals (EHPs) are a vital element in our society. Building on our rich heritage, CIEH campaigns to ensure that government policy addresses the needs of communities and businesses in achieving and maintaining improvements to our environment and our health.

This *Manifesto for Environmental Health* brings together essential policy initiatives covering housing, food safety, environmental protection, health and safety at work and public health. We want to see political parties and candidates commit to supporting environmental health and the crucial work of EHPs.

Making domestic energy efficiency a Government priority

Across the UK, homes account for 14% of total carbon emissions.¹ There were 50,000 excess winter deaths in 2017/18 in England and Wales² and cold homes are directly responsible for around a third of these.³ More than 2.5 million people in England are currently living in fuel poverty and around 1.2 million homes are languishing in the two lowest energy efficiency bands – F and G.⁴ In Wales, 155,000 households are living in fuel poverty⁵ and Northern Ireland has the highest level of fuel poverty in the UK. The period 2017/18 saw the highest recorded number of excess winter deaths in NI since data began in 1974/75.⁶ By speeding up energy efficiency measures in our homes right now, the Government could help to reduce unnecessary NHS costs, fuel poverty and make greater progress towards the 2050 carbon net zero target.

The next Government should make the improvement of energy efficiency a priority across all the UK nations and provide adequate funding to speed up progress.

This investment should be targeted at the homes of households living in fuel poverty and homes with the lowest energy efficiency ratings. Financial incentives for homeowners should also be provided by the Government to speed up investment in energy efficiency. Northern Ireland remains outside the Warm Homes Discount Scheme and funding provided for the Affordable Warmth Scheme that operates in Northern Ireland is unsustainable. These policies should be reviewed.

Future of housing

There are plans for 1.5million new UK homes by 2022.⁷ Planning and building control systems should be reviewed to ensure these work effectively in providing safe and healthy environments for current and future occupants. The homes we build today will be around for a long time, so these should conform to the highest standards, both in their design and execution.

The next Government should update planning and building control policies to ensure that homes built today are healthy and safe, fully energy efficient, have adequate ventilation and, as far as possible, mitigate against the effects of climate change and unpredictable weather patterns.

This means new building control regulations to ensure that these reflect the highest standards of insulation for heating and cooling that technologies allow and ensuring that planning guidelines and requirements also reflect current best practice on matters such as Sustainable Urban Drainage.

¹ UK Housing: Fit for the future? Committee on Climate Change, Feb 2019.

² Excess winter mortality in England and Wales: 2017 to 2018 (provisional) and 2016 to 2017 (final), ONS, published Nov 2018.

³ 17,000 people in the UK died last winter due to cold housing, Press release by E3G, Feb 2019.

⁴ Data extracted from English housing survey - 2017/18, ONS, published 2019.

⁵ Fuel poverty estimates for Wales: 2018, Welsh Government, published Aug 2019.

⁶ Age Sector Platform Data (published 2019)

⁷ UK Housing: Fit for the future? Committee on Climate Change, Feb 2019.

National registration scheme for the private rented sector

A quarter of private rented homes in England are non-decent – the highest proportion of all the tenures⁸ – yet local authorities have limited knowledge of landlords and the properties in their local areas. There is no statutory requirement for landlords to declare their interests and rogue landlords exploit this to the detriment of their tenants. Registration and licensing schemes covering all rented properties already operate in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.⁹

The next Government should commit to introducing a mandatory national registration scheme for all landlords and agents in England to enable better regulation and oversight of the private rented sector by regulating authorities.

The register would also provide tenants with information to make better decisions when choosing a place to rent.

Ensuring the safety and security of the UK food supply

As a member of the EU, the UK is subject to a number of measures to protect public and environmental health, with over 50 separate EU Directives and Regulations that govern food standards in the UK. More than 40% of all legislation coming out of EU is food related.¹⁰ Free trade deals with non-EU countries could therefore present a number of potential risks to UK food safety and standards, including: beef

hormones, bovine somatotropin used in milk production, genetic modification of crops, the use of chlorinated disinfectants to reduce bacterial contamination of poultry carcasses, as well as food containing a wider range and levels of food additives.¹¹

We would like the next Government to commit to maintaining and improving our high food standards post-Brexit and in any future trade deals.

Food production and sustainability

Agriculture contributes to 10% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions.¹² In order to minimise negative environmental impacts, and ensure the UK has continued access to sustainable sources of food, we must transform our food system. The new National Food Strategy being developed by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs needs to have strong links between sustainability and safe, healthy diets for everyone.

We would like to see the appointment of a new Minister for Food to oversee the consultation and delivery of the new National Food Strategy, with a mandate to ensure all policies related to food work together and deliver health and environmental benefits.

Unnecessary waste should be minimised throughout the food production and supply systems. Every year, an estimated 10 million tonnes of food is thrown away, 70% of which was intended to be consumed by people.¹³ Food is wasted at all stages of the food chain, creating missed opportunities for the economy and food security.

⁸ English Housing Survey - 2017/18 (published 2019)

⁹ A National Registration Scheme for the private rented sector, CEIH parliamentary briefing, 10 July 2019.

¹⁰ [Brexit and Environmental Health: Parliamentary Briefing](#), CEIH, 2017.

¹¹ Feeding Britain: Food Security after Brexit, Centre for Food Policy briefing, July 2018.

¹² [2017 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#), ONS for BEIS, published March 2019.

¹³ [Food Surplus and Waste in the UK – Key Facts](#), WRAP, 2019.

The next Government must meet its commitment of halving food loss and waste throughout the system by 2030 as per targets in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Enhancing food safety and standards

One million people suffer from food-borne illnesses in England every year, with an approximate annual cost to the UK economy of £1bn.¹⁴ Across the food industry, environmental health professionals play an essential role in ensuring that all food produced, transported, stored, prepared and sold is safe and what it says it is. Effective and independent regulation provides assurance for consumers that businesses are meeting the required standards. Whilst the majority of food businesses operate within the law, a significant number are identified as requiring improvement each year. Of the food establishments registered by local authorities in England, Northern Ireland and Wales in 2018/19, 27% received written warnings and 5,374 were subject to formal enforcement action for food hygiene offences.¹⁵ In Wales and Northern Ireland, mandatory Food Hygiene Rating schemes ensure consumers are able to make informed choices about where they eat and purchase food.

To enable consumers in England to make informed choices about where they eat and purchase food, the next Government must make the display of Food Hygiene Ratings by food businesses mandatory.

Action should also be taken to ensure local authorities allocate sufficient resources to food regulation.

An effective and independent Office for Environmental Protection

As the UK leaves the European Union, we need to see the establishment of new environmental regulators for all the UK nations, which are transparent, accountable and completely independent of UK governments.

The design of these new regulators and their powers are key to enabling these bodies to perform a crucial role with regards to air quality and other environmental protection laws.

¹⁴ Ensuring food safety and standards: Session 2017-2019, NAO, June 2019.

¹⁵ Annual report on local authority food law enforcement for England, Northern Ireland and Wales 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, Food Standards Agency, 2019.

Robust and ambitious air quality targets

Good air quality is a basic requirement and determinant of human health. In the UK, 722 Air Quality Management Areas exist where pollutant levels exceed EU legal limits.¹⁶ Some of these limits are set at twice the World Health Organisation (WHO) acceptable levels.¹⁷

The next Government should commit to introducing air quality targets, which are legally binding and commit to reaching World Health Organisation guidelines in the shortest time possible, in order to protect public health.

Bringing in UK-wide measures to reduce transport emissions

Road transport is the most common reason for the introduction of Air Quality Management Areas across the UK, from Northern Ireland to London.¹⁸ Reducing road transport emissions is therefore vital to reducing people's exposure to air pollution.

The next Government should take a UK-wide approach to reducing air pollution from road transport.

Policies should include bringing forward the ban on the sales of new diesel and petrol cars to 2030, setting up a reliable vehicle labelling scheme to help consumers to choose the cleanest vehicles and introducing obligations on vehicle manufacturers to retrofit or compensate consumers for the Euro 5 and 6 diesel powered vehicles, which did not meet their own standards.¹⁹

Decarbonising our economy

The move towards a zero-carbon economy should be reached as quickly as possible if we are to reduce the likelihood of catastrophic weather events now and in the future.

The next Government must act with urgency to introduce new UK-wide legislation and policies in order to reduce carbon emissions across all aspects of our daily lives, including housing, transport, infrastructure and the economy.

This legislation should establish a new overarching goal to consider climate change, sustainability and carbon reduction as part of all central and local government decisions and policies.

¹⁶ <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/summary> PM10 annual average concentration set at 40µg/m³ in the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000 (SI 928), The Air Quality (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (SI 3043).

¹⁷ PM10 annual average concentration set at 20µg/m³ in "WHO Air quality guidelines for particulate matter, ozone, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide; Global update 2005: Summary of risk assessment".

¹⁸ <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/summary> accessed on 26 June 2019

¹⁹ *All new diesel cars fail EU emissions standards, says study*, Financial Times, 6 June 2018.

Better regulation of cosmetic treatments

Many cosmetic treatments offered on the high street pose a risk to members of the public, yet the legislation to regulate these treatments is out of date and results in a patchwork of different approaches. Many cosmetic treatments puncture the skin, which carries a risk of blood borne viruses and other serious infections to the client. As regulators, our members are deeply concerned about the powers of local authorities to protect public health. Furthermore, no Government agency collects official data on the size of the market or adverse events and there are no clear channels for the public to report instances when things go wrong. In Wales, a mandatory licensing scheme is being introduced requiring the training and licensing of practitioners carrying out tattooing including semi-permanent make-up, body piercing, acupuncture and electrolysis.

The next Government should establish an England-wide licensing scheme for cosmetic treatments, underpinned by thorough standards and training requirements for all practitioners carrying out these treatments.

Public awareness raising campaigns should be funded by the Department of Health and Social Care and focus on the risks of treatments, how to choose a safe practitioner and also how to report concerns and complications.

Health and safety at work

1.4million working people are suffering from a work-related illness and there are still an annual 581,000 workplace injuries taking place each year in Great Britain.²⁰

The next Government should protect the standards, safety and health of workers across the UK, post Brexit, as well as working to ensure that adequate resources are available at local authority level to protect employees working for small businesses.

Getting in Touch

We would be delighted to hear from you and work with you going forwards, so please do get in touch with our **Head of Policy and Campaigns, Ross Matthewman:** r.matthewman@cieh.org

²⁰ Health and Safety Statistics, HSE website, last accessed November 2019.