

## ANNUAL REVIEW

1<sup>st</sup> May 2022 – 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023

*Thank you to our Board of Directors, our Chair the Rt Hon Theresa May MP, our Honorary President Emily Shuckburgh and all our members who provided huge support and expertise during another busy and eventful year for the Aldersgate Group. Our work would not have been possible without your support.*

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## ANNUAL STATEMENT

### Policy progress over the past year

With the Russian invasion of Ukraine and a rapidly evolving political context (including three UK Prime Ministers), this reporting period was marked by fast-changing circumstances that posed challenges to political progress on the net zero transition and nature restoration. The Aldersgate Group responded to these challenges by consistently advocating for ambitious climate and environment policies, highlighting the high levels of business support and the associated economic opportunities.

To drive a high level of policy ambition, the Group contributed extensively to [Mission Zero](#), an independent review carried out by Chris Skidmore MP and commissioned by then-Prime Minister Liz Truss. We held two roundtables, submitted written evidence to the review team and, following publication, urged Government to implement key recommendations from the report. The Aldersgate Group was also actively involved in pushing for the publication of the UK's long-term environmental targets and Environmental Improvement Plan, highlighting the importance of these in supporting nature restoration.

Meanwhile we continued to develop our industrial decarbonisation and energy policy programme, harnessing the increasingly political imperative to deliver energy savings and to accelerate decarbonisation efforts in critical economic sectors. We produced a report on proposals for separating electricity from gas prices through a Green Power Pool, as well as a report on how product standards can grow the market for low carbon industrial products. In addition, the Group published policy briefings detailing the next critical steps for driving greater building energy efficiency and decarbonising energy.

A golden thread through all our policy work remains the economic imperative to act ambitiously on climate and nature. As illustrated by the USA's Inflation Reduction Act and the EU's Green Industrial Plan, the international race to deliver on low carbon products and services is tightening. We believe it is essential for our future prosperity that the UK remains in a leadership position to deliver these.

### Significant wins

The challenging political context meant that the Group's role in advocating for ambitious climate and environment action became even more crucial, and we used this to deliver several wins and positive developments. The updated Green Finance Strategy contained many welcome advances for which the Aldersgate Group advocated actively. For example, the Strategy extended the coverage of mandatory transition plans to include large private corporations, as recommended by Aldersgate Group and business members in a letter to the Chancellor ahead of the Strategy's publication. The Strategy also announced a consultation on a green taxonomy, on which we have been working for several years through our membership of the Green Technical Advisory Group.

The Government's Energy Security Day also saw progress on key priority policy areas for the Group, such as the announcement of a carbon leakage consultation and examination of the potential to introduce a carbon border adjustment mechanism.

The Aldersgate Group was also asked to support the Secretariat of the Net Zero Council, announced on Energy Security Day. The Council's establishment was a direct response to asks from the Aldersgate Group and other organisations (such as the Corporate Leaders

Group and the Broadway Initiative) for more structured and regular engagement with Government to accelerate decarbonisation in key sectors.

### **Expanding political engagement**

To complement these areas of work, the Aldersgate Group made a concerted push to expand our political engagement programme. We focused efforts on highlighting significant business support for net zero and nature within the business community and underscoring the importance of maintaining political consensus. This engagement work was – and will continue to be – important to maximise the impact of our policy recommendations and minimise any potential backsliding on ambition.

Over the reporting year we had 272 meetings with MPs, peers, civil servants, advisors, government ministers and other political actors, spanning our full policy programme. We prioritised cross-party engagement to build a broad and durable coalition of support for net zero and nature restoration; we saw this as crucial to enhance the opportunities and mitigate the potential risks arising from a General Election next year, which may result in significant changes within and between political parties.

### **Communicating effectively and driving the debate**

In parallel to our policy and public affairs work, we continued to build the Group's communication capabilities to influence the policy debate and amplify the voice of progressive business on climate and environmental issues. By leveraging policy developments and key milestones, the Aldersgate Group was able to secure 197 pieces of coverage over the year, spanning trade press, regional outlets and national broadcast media. We also expanded our coverage into high-profile broadcast outlets such as Times Radio, BBC Radio 4, and BBC Radio 5 Live.

A renewed effort was placed on in-person events to maximise networking opportunities for members and enhance engagement with policy makers. During the year, we hosted 13 events with a range of high-profile speakers, each sharing critical perspectives on how to accelerate progress towards net zero and nature restoration. Significant keynote speakers include Thérèse Coffey MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Graham Stuart MP, the UK Minister of State for Climate, Dr Alan Whitehead MP, Shadow Energy Minister, Lord Deben, Chair of the Climate Change Committee, Will Lockhart, Lead UK Negotiator at CBD COP15, His Excellency Mr Sherif Kamel, Ambassador of Egypt to the UK, and the Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP, Chair of the Net Zero Review and former Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth.

### **Maximising member benefits**

Given the important role of Aldersgate Group members, work continued to maximise the benefits they experience. We issued high-quality analysis of political developments to members through intelligence sharing; we also diversified our range of roundtables, meetings and events, and promoted collaboration amongst members through knowledge hubs.

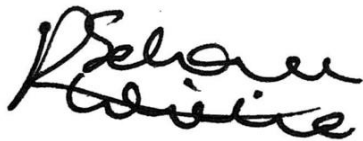
Most importantly, the Group further enhanced our online offering to members by launching a new website with optimised features and more interactive content. The new website features a dedicated members' area, where members can access private roundtables, confidential briefings and meeting notes. This function aims to increase member benefits and facilitate greater interaction with the Group's work.

## Preparing for next year

Looking ahead to the next financial year, it will be as vital as ever for the Aldersgate Group to maintain a strong presence in the policy debate, clearly and persuasively advocating for delivery on climate and environmental commitments. We look forward to continuing our work with members and partners across sectors to make sure that the UK continues to reduce its emissions and restore the natural environment, whilst securing a thriving and resilient economy. This will be especially important as political parties prepare for a General Election: we want to ensure that a continued commitment to sustainability is embedded in policy.

As ever, we would like to thank our members for their continued support for Aldersgate Group's work and look forward to an exciting year ahead.

With best wishes,



Rachel Solomon Williams  
Executive Director



Rt Hon Theresa May MP  
Chair

## POLICY UPDATE

### UK climate and energy policy

**Objective:** (1) Continue to provide compelling evidence for climate and environmental action in a challenging cost of living context, including supporting the Net Zero Review conducted by Chris Skidmore MP.

(2) Urge the UK Government to continue developing the policy framework to accelerate progress in critical areas such as power, buildings, transport and industry.

(3) Push for greater cross-government collaboration and policy cohesion in implementing the Net Zero Strategy.

### **Progress: Net Zero Delivery**

The most significant progress on net zero delivery in the past year was the publication of the Government's [Powering Up Britain: The Net Zero Growth Plan](#). With over 2,800 pages of documents, policy statements and consultations, these plans aim to improve energy security, green the financial system and ensure the net-zero strategy is lawful. Secretary of State Grant Shapps MP set out aims to deliver a "radical shift in our energy system towards cleaner, more affordable energy sources to power more of Britain from Britain".

Prior to the publication of the documents, the Group worked closely with relevant departments across Government on elements of the strategy. This involved advocating for ambitious planning reform, changes to the connections process, and policies to accelerate renewable roll-out, and the expansion of the UK's grid infrastructure. It also entailed working closely with Government and industry to showcase the business case for public investment in net zero and clean energy transition.

*Powering Up Britain* also included a response to Chris Skidmore's Independent Review of Net Zero. Throughout the various stages of the Skidmore Review, the Group played a key role, organising cross-sector roundtables, public and private events between AG members and Chris Skidmore MP, and reviews of written content produced throughout the review process (including a near final draft of the Review itself).

Following the publication of *Powering Up Britain*, the Group has continued to engage with Government across its departments, advocating for ambitious implementation of the policies outlined in the document, and providing detail on where further action is needed. We will soon be publishing a series of reports addressing industrial decarbonisation, household energy transition, and how the UK should respond to the US Inflation Reduction Act, further supporting this work.

In June 2023, the Government also closed its consultation on [Developing the UK ETS](#), which proposed expanding the UK's primary mechanism for pricing carbon emissions to a greater portion of the economy, something that the Group has long advocated for, and has been announced as part of the Government's response to the consultation since.

However, overall progress on emissions reductions has been slow, with investment in crucial sectors falling, particularly in light of the fiscal support packages being offered in other countries, such as the US' Inflation Reduction Act. Aldersgate Group will continue to advocate for urgent progress on these policy areas in the year ahead, given their crucial role in meeting the UK's net zero target. We will particularly look to influence what an ambitious response to the Inflation Reduction Act will look like in September 2023.

Furthermore, the Group has published a series of new reports and briefings, identifying policy gaps for the decarbonisation of power, industry, transport, and the financial system. We have also maintained a close relationship with officials, Government Ministers, and opposition MPs, to increase the pressure for ambitious policy making ahead of the next General Election. Through several public and private events and roundtables, we have also connected progressive industry voices with officials and MPs to illustrate the business ambition for ambitious policymaking.

### **Power sector**

In light of the slow progress on the UK's journey to a decarbonised power system by 2035, the Group has been extremely active in advocating for ambitious policy change to accelerate the expansion of renewable energy and the requisite grid infrastructure to enable widespread electrification.

In April 2023 the Group published a report with UCL detailing the steps needed to decarbonise power, prior to which we supported a series of working papers from UCL detailing options for market reforms to reduce electricity bills.

One of the options, the Green Power Pool, presented in both these working papers and previous publications from the Group and UCL, was proposed by Government as an option for reforming the UK power market in its 2022 Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA). This important call for evidence, to which the Group responded and discussed in detail with officials across government, has begun the process of updating the UK's power sector to bring it in line with the needs of a low carbon energy system. However, further action has been slow, impacting investment across the energy sector.

To tackle the 13-year wait times renewable developers face for connections to the grid (on top of 10-year delays due to planning inefficiencies), the Group engaged heavily with officials and politicians, advocating new queue management rules and an overhaul to the planning regime. These recommendations also featured in the aforementioned publications, and in informal thought pieces published on the AG Insights platform.

Some of these efforts have borne fruit: in *Powering Up Britain*, the Government established a new solar energy taskforce, and committed to implementing planning reforms via the National Planning Policy Framework to speed up the delivery of renewable energy developments and electricity grid expansion.

In June, the Government also tabled an amendment to the Energy Bill, introducing a legal requirement for Ofgem to support the UK's net zero targets, something the Group has been advocating for over several years. This positive

step will now allow network operators to undertake much needed anticipatory investment in grid infrastructure, speeding up the connection of new renewables to the UK's electricity network, and ultimately, end users.

### **Industrial decarbonisation**

In the last year there has been very little progress on the decarbonisation of industry and manufacturing in the UK, with significant policy gaps remaining. In June 2023 the Government concluded a valuable consultation on the introduction of a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and mandatory product standards – the Group's response to the consultation is [available here](#). These measures, for which the Group has been a strong advocate, are designed to improve the competitiveness of industry and create demand for low carbon products.

The consultation marked a significant moment in the development of policy for industrial decarbonisation, as Government put forward its intention to introduce a CBAM and some form of mandatory product standards, both complex policy mechanisms that have been under debate for many years. Ahead of the consultation, the Group published a report on [the role of mandatory product standards in creating demand for low carbon industrial products](#), and also organised several roundtables between Government, and Group members, to influence thinking for a CBAM and mandatory product standards.

We will continue to advocate for the most ambitious trajectories for both of these policy options, and for each measure to be applied on as broad a scope as possible to accelerate competitive decarbonisation across the economy.

In late April, the Group published a major report with UCL, detailing [the policies needed to support industrial electrification](#), one of the most effective means of reducing emissions in industry. We will continue to advocate for the policies in this briefing with both Government and opposition, beginning with a response to the Government's consultation on industrial electrification, which was published after the release of our report on the topic. We will also continue to build on our power sector decarbonisation work to ensure that industrial electricity prices are considered in the REMA process.

In addition, this new research detailing the economic, social, and strategic benefits of industrial decarbonisation will also make the case for a comprehensive industrial investment strategy, something the Group will advocate strongly for over the coming months. The absence of a coordinated industrial strategy also continues to delay investment in decarbonisation solutions, with different sectors lacking confidence in the technology and/or fuels that will be available to them. In particular, the slow deployment of funds from the CCUS Infrastructure Fund and the Net Zero Hydrogen Fund have meant that willing adopters of these technologies still don't know where and when it will be used, preventing investment in new plants. In the coming months, the Aldersgate Group will produce a letter with business to the Prime Minister, calling for action on the UK's industrial strategy.

### **Buildings**

The UK has seen slow progress on reducing embodied emissions in the built environment, with even poorer performance on advancing energy efficiency in buildings. In January 2023, the Group published a briefing, *Warming Britain Affordably: How Energy Efficiency Can Insulate People From Higher Bills, Deliver Energy Sovereignty And Create Jobs*. This paper outlined the policy priorities for improving energy efficiency to reduce emissions, lower bills, and create job opportunities across the country.

The Group also advocated for ambitious policy action to decarbonise industrial products and construction materials. Please see the above section on industrial decarbonisation.

## Transport

Government has had limited progress on advancing transport policy in the past year. For example, there was some optimism with the Government committing to a Transport Bill in the most recent Queen's Speech (May 2022). This was expected to deal with the delivery of safer, cleaner and more innovative services, but has not been given political priority. That said, there has been a final public consultation on the regulatory framework for introducing a Zero Emissions Vehicle Mandate for new cars and vans, which should further ensure the 2030 ban on new petrol and diesel cars is brought in.

Additionally, on maritime, the Government put forward options for expanding the UK Emissions Trading Scheme to cover emissions from some parts of the UK's shipping sector. The Group has advocated for more ambitious coverage of the sector in the Government's *Developing the UK ETS* consultation, and continues to support calls for linkage of the UK's Scheme with the EU ETS (which has put forward more ambitious proposals for a carbon tax on maritime emissions).

## Ensuring the development of a world leading environmental framework

**Objective:**

- (1) Advocate for the publication of an ambitious Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) and highlight how Government and business can deliver on the commitments in the EIP.
- (2) Showcase the benefits of smart environmental regulation in driving environmental improvements.
- (3) Ensure ambitious and timely delivery of measures set out in the Environment Act and in the EIP.

**Progress:** This year saw major progress on nature policy, with legally binding long-term environmental targets consulted on and laid in Parliament on biodiversity, water, resources and waste and air quality. The Group, having strongly advocated for statutory targets, warmly welcomed their arrival, which put forward a wide set of objectives to drive environmental improvement. The Group discussed the quality of the targets extensively with members, and subsequently noted gaps - for example an apex resource productivity target - and opportunities to tighten ambition - for example through upgrading the habitats target. The Group produced an extensive response to the consultation and held meetings with Government, including roundtables with Ministers, briefing sessions with special advisors, and member roundtables with Defra officials.



Ahead of the publication of the first Environmental Improvement Plan, the Group advocated for tangible measures in the Plan to support high-level vision statements. We worked closely with the Broadway Initiative on a blueprint for Government, which set out how the EIP should make responsibilities clear, join up the various mechanisms to create a robust framework for delivery, and in turn accelerate progress towards net zero and create the basis for innovation and job creation.

Another milestone of environmental policy was the publication of the Government's Environmental Principles Policy Statement, which aimed to integrate environmental principles into policy making across Whitehall. The Group wrote to several parliamentary committees scrutinising the statement with recommendations for increasing the ambition – for example by including environmental improvement in addition to preventing harm. We also urged Defra to implement the legal duty on ministers to have due regard to the policy as soon as possible.

In addition to utilising these opportunities, we worked hard to mitigate against risks to environmental policy. Chiefly, the Group brought together dozens of businesses with a clear message to Government about the risks of the Retained EU Law (REUL) Bill. Together with other organisations, we raised concerns that the Bill could potentially result in the removal of important and well-established EU-derived environmental legislation without adequate parliamentary scrutiny. The Government since agreed to remove the sunset clause from the Bill and instead provide Parliament with a list of the legislation it intends to repeal. This constituted a significant win for domestic environmental policy.

Finally, we extensively engaged with key stakeholders, such as the Office for Environmental Protection, to understand their upcoming priorities and make targeted contributions. The Group also supported the development of the Nature Positive Business Pledge, which enables businesses to commit to halt and reverse impacts on nature as well as provide them with a network to support knowledge sharing.

### **Accelerating resource efficiency**

**Objective:** (1) Work to put resource efficiency and circular economy higher on the policy agenda following a slowdown in progress.  
(2) Promote the importance of this agenda in other relevant areas of policy such as buildings, transport and industrial decarbonisation.  
(3) Foster more cross-departmental government collaboration on the resource efficiency agenda.

**Progress:** The circular economy policy landscape unfortunately continued to stagnate within Government this year, with delays to several key policies. Still, the Group continued to keep the resource efficiency brief on the Government's horizon. For example, in meeting with Secretary of State Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP's special advisor, we highlighted how Defra could ambitiously implement existing proposals and plug policy gaps – from greening public procurement, fiscal incentives and circular infrastructure. The Group also actively participated in Defra's Resources and Waste Stakeholder Group.

Most significantly in this space, the Group advocated for the missing statutory long-term target on resource productivity that Government committed to in the 2020 environmental targets policy paper consultation. The Group brought together expertise and data from members to help demonstrate the opportunities from such a target. Whilst this target did not appear in the final suite of targets laid before Parliament, Defra hired an agency to research which metric would be the most appropriate, and we expect consultation on such a target in the coming years.

Through its industrial decarbonisation programme, the Group advocated for greater resource and energy efficiency in industrial processes, and greater retention of critical materials. This work focused on raising the profile of circular economy principles and associated policy needs with government departments beyond Defra, namely in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ).

### Driving progress on green finance

**Objective:** (1) Ensure the UK is on track to become the ‘world’s first net zero-aligned financial centre’.  
(2) Influencing the Government’s update to the Green Finance Strategy and key policies, such as a comprehensive, efficient and co-ordinated environmental and climate reporting and disclosure regime.  
(3) Using our seat on key taskforces, such as the HMT-led Green Technical Advisory Group (GTAG) and the Transition Plan Taskforce (TPT), to progress the development of green finance policies.

**Progress:** The Aldersgate Group, with support from the Centre for Understanding Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP), published the report *Building a UK Net Zero-aligned Financial Centre: what next* in June 2022. The report was developed following two roundtables and significant engagement with real economy and financial institution members. It explored the next steps for the new Sustainability Disclosure Requirements framework, setting out key considerations for the development of broader environmental reporting requirements and highlighting a range of key financial systemic issues which need to be addressed by Government and regulators in the near future. These include a potential reform of capital requirement rules and the development of guidance on responsible stewardship.

The Group continued to build on the report’s recommendations throughout the year on areas such as responsible stewardship. In January 2023, the Aldersgate Group held a joint event with Aviva Investors, titled *Leading from the front: how can finance steward a net zero economy?* This included speakers from Aviva Investors, the Financial Conduct Authority, WWF-UK, CBRE, Phoenix Group, and GAM Investments.

Previously the Aldersgate Group fed into the development of the Government’s *Green Finance Strategy* (July 2019) and subsequently urged Government to build on the policy commitments set out in the Strategy. In 2022-23, we focused on influencing the development of the UK’s update to the strategy and the ideas within it. Ahead of the strategy’s publication (March 2023), the Aldersgate Group published a briefing with our key policy recommendations focusing on

developing a comprehensive regulatory framework, tracking private financial flows, using public financing tools to attract private finance, and providing policy clarity to the real economy.

The Group also coordinated a private letter to HM Treasury, DESNZ and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), outlining the positive business case for broadening the scope of mandatory transition plans to large, unlisted companies. We were pleased to see this reflected in the update to the Green Finance Strategy, which announced a consultation on the introduction of requirements for the UK's largest companies to disclose their transition plans in autumn/winter 2023.

In addition to our membership of GTAG, the Aldersgate Group joined the TPT from April 2022, which is working to develop science-based 'gold standard' guidance for transition plans including a sector-neutral and sector-specific guidance. The Group responded to the TPT's call for evidence on a sector-neutral framework for private sector transition plans in May 2022 and held a members' roundtable on the subject in January 2023, to provide a real economy perspective.

### Skills and just transition

**Objective:** Highlighting the business case for rapid progress on delivering a low carbon skills strategy, building on the recommendations from the Green Jobs Taskforce.

**Progress:** In Spring 2022, the Aldersgate Group joined the Green Jobs Delivery Group, a taskforce set up by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Department for Education (DfE), Defra, and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to monitor the progress against the Green Jobs Taskforce report. As members, we used this platform to support the next phase of delivery from the Green Jobs Taskforce report.

We further expanded on our work in this area by using the key recommendation from the Taskforce in policy documents and in meetings with government officials and parliamentarians to promote the development of a low-carbon skills strategy in the UK. In July 2022, for example, we participated in a workshop on green skills for nature restoration with Defra. We also included skills in all of our major reports, such as *Building a UK Net Zero-aligned Financial Centre* and *Warming Britain Affordably*.

The Aldersgate Group also formed part of the Expert Advisory Group convened by the Climate Change Committee to provide input into the Committee's *A Net Zero workforce* report, and will continue to support its work on skills.

### UK leadership on global climate and environmental diplomacy

**Objective:** (1) Ahead of and during the COP27 and CBD15, ensure that the voice of progressive business is heard and that the support for ambitious outcomes at both summits is clear.  
(2) Organise a series of informative 'conversational-style' panel events on energy and industry, nature, and agriculture – key issues debated at the global negotiations.

(3) Keep members updated on developments at the COP summits, with concise regular email newsletters.

**Progress:** Building on the success of our influence at COP26 in Glasgow, the Aldersgate Group dedicated resource early to ensure members were kept informed of key developments at COP27 and that there was a strong business narrative in advocating for ambitious outcomes. We convened several business members to publicly urge the UK and other world governments to honour the promises made at COP26 and deliver updated Nationally Determined Contributions that would increase ambition in line with the 1.5C target in the Paris Agreement.

We also held an in-person event to discuss the progress made by the UK Presidency of COP26 and highlight what Aldersgate Group believed should be the priority areas of progress at COP27. Minister of State for Climate at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Graham Stuart MP, delivered the keynote speech at the event.

During the summit, we carried out a series of virtual conversational events targeted at specific thematic days at COP27. These events focused on delivering sustainable low-carbon agriculture in a changing climate; nature's fundamental role in addressing the climate crisis; and decarbonising energy and industry across the world.

Our COP27 work culminated in a public webinar reflecting on the outcomes of the summit, including a keynote address from the Ambassador of Egypt to the UK and Northern Ireland, His Excellency Mr Sherif Kamel. A cross-economy panel also provided insights on the COP27 outcomes and what must come next to accelerate progress.

While the CBD COP15 Conference was delayed multiple times, the Aldersgate Group hosted an online event in July 2022, with contributions from the Lead UK Negotiator at CBD COP15 and a panel exploring what to expect from the international negotiations, and the role of business and the policy support they require to make real progress. Finally, after the conclusion of the summit, we hosted an event, reflecting on the conference's outcomes and the passing of the Global Biodiversity Framework. At the event, the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Thérèse Coffey MP, delivered the keynote speech which focused on the UK's role in advocating for an ambitious agreement.

### Progress on cross-cutting issues

**Objective:** (1) Targeted interventions on key cross-cutting issues: planning, procurement, role of regulators, trade and economic performance metrics.  
(2) Watching brief on EU environmental policy and building strategic relationships.

**Progress:** In other areas of policy, there have been several important developments related to net zero and nature that the Aldersgate Group has been able to influence. On trade, we were invited onto the Climate and Trade Commission set up by Queen Mary's University to advise the UK Government on aligning trade and sustainability objectives. As a member of the Commission, the Group presented recommendations to the Labour Shadow Frontbench and to officials

across Whitehall. The Group held several roundtables with senior civil servants from the Department for International Trade (DIT), BEIS, HM Treasury and Defra, covering topics like carbon leakage, investment protection and due diligence. We also gave written evidence to the International Trade Committee's inquiry into trade and climate.

The Group also produced consultation responses on other important policy spheres. On agricultural policy, the Group responded to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee's inquiry on Government's progress in delivering the Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS). Related to planning, the Aldersgate Group responded to the Government's consultations on biodiversity net gain and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. These consultation responses emphasised the need to ensure additionality with biodiversity and that any changes to the planning framework incorporates climate and environment.

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

**Objective:**

- (1) Increase the range of government departments we engage with across Whitehall.
- (2) Engage with the Shadow Cabinet, as well as critical groups of backbenchers (such as the Conservative Northern Research Group of MPs).
- (3) Establish targeted relationships with organisations that will help the Aldersgate Group be better connected with the perspectives of critical local actors (such as local authorities) and devolved administrations.
- (4) Expand cross-parliamentary engagement and lay the groundwork for the next General Election, ensuring that all major political parties understand key climate and environmental issues.

**Progress:** The Aldersgate Group had 272 political and policy meetings in the last year, with MPs, Peers, civil servants, advisors, Ministers and other political actors. The Group managed to broaden and deepen relationships across Whitehall, meeting with BEIS, DEFRA, HM Treasury, the Bank of England, DfE, Department for Transport (DfT), DLUHC, the FCA, the Climate Change Committee and the OEP. These meetings covered topics right across the policy spectrum of net zero and nature, with a focus on accelerating the implementation of the Government's net zero strategy and advancing its plans to deliver on environmental commitments. For example, the Group directly presented feedback to Minister Rebecca Pow as part of a roundtable launching Defra's long-term environmental targets.

Another key priority for the Group this year was increasing its engagement with the Shadow Cabinet. In fact, we doubled and tripled our engagement with the Conservative Party and the Labour Party respectively. Increasing the remit of political engagement will remain a key priority for the Aldersgate Group ahead of the upcoming General Election, and we will work to ensure that climate and environmental issues are thoroughly understood by all major political parties.

The Group also looked to expand engagement with backbench MPs to increase the awareness of the benefits associated with the net zero transition. In particular, the Group identified the Northern Research Group (NRG) of

Conservative MPs as particularly influential in political discourse about net zero, the energy crisis and public spending. Over the course of this reporting period, we met with ten MPs from the NRG to garner support for net zero implementation, and engagement with this important group of MPs will continue to expand in the next reporting period.

## COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

**Objective:** (1) Amplify the voice of progressive business in media narratives and public discourse.  
(2) Provide impactful press releases and reactive statements to key UK and (where relevant) EU policy developments.  
(3) Increase mentions in national media (print, online and broadcast) involving the Aldersgate Group.

**Progress:** This financial year the Aldersgate Group continued to strengthen and develop its communications offering to both members and external stakeholders. The main objective focused on amplifying the voice of progressive business on climate and environmental issues. While this will continue to be a crucial component of our activities next year, we laid the foundation for success in this reporting period.

Media coverage remained strong, with key news releases and reactive commentary featured in leading national publications across the political spectrum including the Times, BBC One, the Guardian, Politico, the Independent, and the New Statesman. There was an increase of high-profile broadcast outlets too, with contributions from the Aldersgate Group appearing on Times Radio, BBC Radio 4, and BBC Radio 5 Live. This was despite a challenging media landscape, marked by the instability of the UK Government, particularly during the period around COP27 with rapid changes in Prime Ministers.

This uncertainty also impacted the Aldersgate Group's blog output, with reactive commentary to ongoing events taking priority over long-form blog content. However, the Group still produced insight-driven pieces for BusinessGreen and supplemented the majority of report launches with in-depth articles to amplify our policy work. Thanks to this and a continued commitment to rapid strategic reactive commentary on key climate and environmental policy issues, social media growth continued at pace, with an increase in Twitter and LinkedIn followers and engagement.

Furthermore, a renewed focus on in-person events allowed the Aldersgate Group to continue to develop its engagement with external stakeholders and members. The Group hosted 13 insightful public events throughout the financial year featuring experts from business, politics and civil society. This included keynote speeches from the Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Graham Stuart MP, the UK Minister of State for Climate, Professor Emily Shuckburgh OBE, Honorary President at the Aldersgate Group, and the Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP, Chair of the Net Zero Review and former Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth.

Aldersgate Group also developed both a new website and an exclusive members' area within the new website. The website was successfully launched in May 2022 and provides a seamless, intuitive, and modern platform to showcase the Aldersgate Group's work. Strengthened SEO capability and integration with Mailchimp and other communications platforms will place the Group in a strong position for the future. All of this is supplemented by an exclusive members area, which provides members with a new way to interact with the Aldersgate Group's activities, from private members meetings, knowledge hubs, briefings and meeting notes.

Beyond these core outputs, the communications team revamped the Aldersgate Group's email system, creating a new set of brand templates to improve clarity for members and external stakeholders. Additionally, the Group developed a new initiative to enhance membership engagement, called Knowledge Hubs. By participating in them, members can gain insights from industry experts on a range of climate and environmental issues including disclosures and delivering on climate and nature targets. Following the success of these meetings, we also created an informal Communications Hub, which aims to bring together communications teams at member organisations to discuss strategy, look ahead to key events, coordinate communications interventions, and share key messages.