



Fresh thinking

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Matthew Spencer, director,
Green Alliance



Putting the green economy at the heart of politics

Economic and financial uncertainties create a new operating environment for the environment community. It is one in which there will be fewer new policy programmes, but where there will be unique opportunities to achieve permanent shifts in the way society, business and the state pursue environmental sustainability.

History tells us that the most powerful ideas and the biggest reforms emerge from the hardest times. Green Alliance's goal is to stimulate fresh thinking by bringing the best business, academic and NGO insights to shape the post-crisis politics so that it delivers a green economy.

I am pleased to present our new strategy for 2012-15. Following a period of review with colleagues and partners, we have set out a direction for the next three years which reflects the changes to our external environment and uses our unique skills and network to maximum effect.

In response to the new political climate we are developing a much greater economic focus, rooted in our strong environmental values. To this end, we are appointing a chief economist to develop the macroeconomic case for a green transition. We are strengthening our work on low carbon energy and resource stewardship, where we have shown we can make an impact in tough times. And we are increasing our scope to work more closely with business, as we will continue to do with NGOs, and to use the leverage provided by the combined force of these two sectors.

The financial crisis has shown us what environmental scientists have known for a long time, that we are all in this together, and that we neglect systemic risk at our peril. We believe that business and academic thinking is often ahead of government policy in grappling with resource stewardship and low carbon innovation, and that NGO understanding of risk is often ahead of that of business and government. Bringing these together in a politically salient way is Green Alliance's strength.

This new strategy reinforces our think tank capability and strengthens our role as an advocate. It will enable us to magnify and inform the thinking of leaders across business, politics and the NGO sectors and to nurture cross-party support for environmental values. We aim to ensure that once the acute phase of the financial crisis is over the UK can speed up its journey to becoming a green economy.

Matthew Spencer
director
March 2012

Our starting points

Society enhances its well-being and security if it operates within the capacity of natural systems. Living within these boundaries protects the health and beauty of our world. It also drives innovation and learning in business and increases prosperity.

Economic turmoil stimulates new economic and business models. Low carbon infrastructure, better stewardship of resources and the protection and restoration of natural systems provide the foundations for a more resilient economy.

Good government is essential to create these conditions and protect the public good because it requires long term decisions and trade-offs to be balanced. The UK's three main political parties each have values which allow them to drive a green transition in our society, but they need fresh ideas, external pressure and peer support to provide effective political leadership.

The UK is a hothouse for environmental debate and can use its leadership to shape environmental markets and green policy internationally.

Our credentials

Green Alliance identifies common interests between organisations and sectors in pursuit of strategic political outcomes. Our impact derives from our values, the power of our network and the quality and integrity of our work.

We work with the most influential figures from the NGO and business communities. We have informed, and been influenced by, the thinking of the leading environmental NGOs since we began over 30 years ago. Over 40 major companies have worked in partnership with us over the past two years, through our theme consortia, business network and strategic projects.

Green Alliance also nurtures strong relationships with political leaders and their advisers. In recent times, we have hosted environment speeches by David Cameron, George Osborne, Nick Clegg, Ed Miliband, William Hague and Vince Cable.

The impact we aim to make

In the three years to 2015 we will:

Make green ideas salient in an era of economic uncertainty.

Embed green thinking more deeply in UK politics, so that the need for resource stewardship, low carbon energy, and a green economy are seen as critical objectives for good government.

Create policy conditions which increase the proportion of UK investment in green goods and services.

What we will do

Stimulate fresh thinking:

Promote the best ideas and insights from Britain and abroad to shape opinion.

Broaden engagement with leading economic thinkers and businesses to strengthen the case for a green economy.

Secure strategic solutions:

Work with our NGO and business partners to secure strategic government decisions to accelerate low carbon investment and resource recovery in the UK.

Nurture new political leaders:

Work with MPs in all the main parties to ensure that the environment is a political priority.

How we will do it

Greater economic focus

With a new senior economist role at Green Alliance we are investing in new expertise for the environment community.

We are focusing our issue expertise on three policy themes where we have shown progress can be made in tough economic times: Low Carbon Energy, Resource Stewardship and Sustainable Economy.

Enhancing our research capability

Our new head of research is increasing our capacity and flexibility to take on research projects in new areas.

We are developing new ways to gain the best insights from our network, including the Catalyst Debates, and guest contributions to our blog and our quarterly magazine *Inside Track*.

Stronger partnership working

We will work closely with our partners to use their knowledge and influence in the environmental debate through three partnership themes: Political Leadership, NGO Engagement and Sustainable Business.

With a new head of sustainable business we are increasing our business capability and improving our understanding of the barriers to sustainable business.

Our themes for 2012-2015

Political Leadership

NGO Engagement

Sustainable Business

Low Carbon Energy

Sustainable Economy

Resource Stewardship

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The UK has committed to achieving an 80 per cent cut in emissions by 2050 in order to tackle climate change. This is challenging, but it can be done. It does however require strong leadership on the part of politicians. Green Alliance has played a crucial part in helping to build cross-party support behind positive action.”

Lord Turner, chair of the government's Committee on Climate Change

Political Leadership



Green Alliance has deservedly become a powerful voice in debates about sustainability. Its new programme, focusing upon opportunities for radical rethinking in the wake of the financial crisis, promises to extend its impact even further.”
Lord Giddens, emeritus professor, London School of Economics and political science fellow, King’s College, Cambridge

Political leadership is essential to creating a green economy. Only politics can make the major structural decisions needed and balance competing objectives.

Competing priorities in an era of austerity may make it a difficult period for environmental policy. We will help to identify the priorities for action for government at the same time as nurturing a new generation of leaders in all three political parties.

We will ensure that each of the parties has the political ideas and internal pressure to put the green economy at the heart of their programmes for government. We aim to significantly increase political responsiveness to external pressure for stronger environmental action during this parliament and to set the stage for ambitious commitments in the next parliament.

Our highly acclaimed Climate Leadership Programme has worked closely with MPs across the parties over the past two years to ensure a well-informed new generation of politicians. This work is being taken forward through deeper engagement with individual MPs on specific issues.

We will be supporting new green thinking in the parties and working to reduce the risk that the cross-party consensus on climate change will fracture as it has done in the US, Australia and Canada.

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One of Green Alliance’s biggest contributions has been helping environmental NGOs to identify the really big challenges and shape common goals.

Working together, we have a better understanding of the issues and can make a greater collective impact on policy. At a very basic level, Green Alliance gets the right people talking: it brings NGOs and government policy makers together.”

Dame Fiona Reynolds, director-general, National Trust

NGO Engagement



I think Green Alliance's ability to operate on the inside and mobilise and hold together a broad alliance on the outside was very skilfully done... the result speaks volumes about the success of Green Alliance's work."

John Sauven, executive director, Greenpeace UK, speaking about joint NGO work on the Fourth Carbon Budget led by Green Alliance in 2010-11

The hopes and concerns of millions of people are expressed by NGOs and they are a powerful force in securing environmental progress.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are a dynamic and powerful force in British society, representing a combined membership numbering several million individuals.

When galvanised to act, NGOs and their members have the power to shift public opinion and change the course of policy.

Green Alliance has a uniquely close working relationship with the leaders and thinkers of the NGO community. We facilitate dialogue between the major environment and development NGOs and government to ensure that the NGO views are clearly heard and the environment is a central consideration in political decisions.

For over twenty years we have convened regular meetings of the chief executives and directors of the major environmental and conservation NGOs, finding areas of common ground and agreeing advocacy priorities. More recently we have extended this to bring together the campaign and policy directors of the National Trust, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, IEEP, Campaign for Better Transport, Wildlife Trusts, CPRE, WWF and RSPB.

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At Unilever we know that our continued business success is dependent on the well-being of society and the environment. And sustainability is a fertile area for business innovation.

Our work in partnership with Green Alliance is valuable in helping set the wider context for these business aims to thrive.”

Gavin Neath, senior vice president sustainability,
Unilever

Sustainable Business

Sustainable business needs good government. Business is a critical delivery agent for greener goods and services. But even the best businesses cannot deliver sustainability without government setting the goals for society, shaping markets and creating confidence.

We work with leading companies to identify new policy insights, and to understand the external barriers to sustainable business in the UK and internationally.

We are focused on reducing policy risks for investment in green goods and services, increasing private sector confidence in the green economic transition and facilitating long term business decision making.

We work in partnership with businesses on strategic projects, as part of our theme consortia and through our business network. We will be forming new business partnerships under this theme to identify the actions needed to make their sectors more sustainable. For example we are establishing a business consortium looking at greener buildings and settlements in the UK.

Current members of our energy and resource theme consortia are: Boots, Cadbury, E.ON, GE, InterfaceFlor, Kyocera, National Grid, PepsiCo, Rio Tinto, Sainsbury's, Shell, Siemens, Valpak and Veolia. See all our current business partners on page 23.

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The UK has a proud and distinguished tradition and reputation for innovation and invention and we feel that continued focus and investment in our high tech, low carbon industries is crucial if we are to maintain our position as a global champion of innovation and change. GE shares the Green Alliance’s belief that we need to be ambitious if we are to deliver desirable environmental outcomes for our towns, cities and citizens now and in the future.”

Mark Elborne, CEO and president,
GE UK

Low Carbon Energy

The renewal and rapid decarbonisation of UK energy infrastructure is the biggest investment challenge of our age. Encouraging demand reduction alongside new supply reduces costs and increases policy certainty for low carbon energy.

The period to 2015 will see major decisions made on the architecture of the energy market for renewables and fossil fuel power stations. It will also be the period in which UK leadership on carbon capture and storage (CCS) demonstration and marine renewables is achieved or lost. These decisions, for long lifetime assets with long procurement times, will have to be taken in a weak economic environment, and in the context of continuing uncertainty over an international climate treaty. We will work with leading businesses and NGOs on the investment and innovation frameworks required to enable renewables and CCS to be deployed cost effectively and at scale.

The views of consumers will determine the political climate in which these decisions are made, and we will promote new thinking on demand reduction and energy services to address the impacts of rising energy prices. We will demonstrate how demand reduction and greater innovation through demonstration and deployment are the keys to a lower cost, low carbon transition.

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Green Alliance is in a unique position to articulate a compelling, evidence-based case for policy action. By engaging in a public debate and building a common understanding on the opportunity for green growth, as well as the transitional costs of investment, it can fulfil a prerequisite for policy action in a sensitive, polarised and, at times, confused political environment.”

Dimitri Zenghelis, senior economic adviser, Cisco systems

Sustainable Economy



Analysing the economic implications of environmental problems is probably the single most important factor in beginning to solve some of these issues. But to date the UK's environmental think tanks and pressure groups have not laid enough emphasis on conducting good economic analyses, and this has hampered the development of sound policy. This is an expertise that urgently needs to be built up."

Fiona Harvey, environment correspondent, *The Guardian*

Green growth has been considered a marginal addition to economic development. But the current failures of conventional economics need an innovative plan for recovery that ensures future economic resilience. This is a unique opportunity to create a sustainable economic model.

We are looking at how the big levers of private finance, public spending, taxation and regulation can be used to accelerate investment in the green economy, to have a positive macroeconomic impact.

We will lead the debate about how government can address economic challenges through a green recovery strategy. This builds on our work on the Green Investment Bank since 2008, which has secured cross party support for a new institution focused on the UK's green infrastructure, and our work on taxation, where we helped to achieve a coalition commitment to increase revenues from green taxes.

A new senior economist at Green Alliance will be working with the economic and finance communities and policy makers to identify and articulate the evidence base for a green economic strategy, where debate is often confused and lacking strong analysis.

We will identify new ways to encourage long term sustainable investment and savings, and ensure that public subsidy for saving is well directed. We will also make the case for better incentives for green enterprise and examine the barriers to early stage finance.

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Good businesses need external thinking partners. Green Alliance's work on the circular economy has not only led to the cultivation of ideas in this area, it has also complemented SITA UK's internal strategic development around the concept.”

Gev Eduljee, director of external affairs, SITA UK

Resource Stewardship

Resource stewardship is critical to our ability to adapt to change. A more circular system, in which resources are kept productive in the economy for longer, and the sustainable sourcing of resources are the key elements of good resource stewardship.

We aim to extend public policy and business practice to ensure a greater emphasis on stewardship and greater circularity in the use of resources.

The next three years offer significant opportunities, including the development of a UK waste prevention plan and a number of EU policy initiatives, including the 'resource efficiency roadmap'; new proposals on sustainable consumption and production; the expansion of ecodesign standards; and changes to waste electronics and packaging regulation.

We will be building on our previous influence on this debate, through our Resource Stewardship business consortium, which has already led government and corporate thinking in its first phase.

We will instigate new debate about the future of product policy in the circular economy, including the roles of product standards, pricing and producer responsibility.

Our work with UK and EU NGOs as part of the Coolproducts campaign will ensure that the UK is among the most proactive nations pressing for stronger ecodesign measures across Europe.

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