EMBARGO: 00:01 WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2024

**Four in five UK adults support new laws to tackle environmental harm and human rights abuses in company supply chains**

New research shows that four in five adults in the UK support new laws requiring companies to prevent serious environmental harm and human rights abuses in their operations or supply chains.

The survey of 2,124 UK adults by the polling company YouGov, released today (17 April) by the Corporate Justice Coalition and Friends of the Earth, comes as politicians prepare to debate a proposal for the UK’s first environmental and human rights due diligence law, and as more than 150 investors and businesses back a statement calling for such a law.

Environmental harm and human rights abuses are rife in many UK company activities and supply chains in the UK and overseas, including sewage and farm animal waste polluting our rivers, deforestation linked to palm oil used in food and detergents, and modern slavery in the fast fashion industry.

The survey, on behalf of the Corporate Justice Coalition (CJC), a coalition of civil society organisations and trade unions, and environmental justice organisation Friends of the Earth, found:

* More than 80 per cent of UK adults want new UK laws requiring British companies to prevent human rights abuses (81%) and serious environmental damage (83%) in their operations and supply chains.
* 73 per cent think UK companies should be doing more to reduce their contribution to global warming.
* More than 60 per cent believe that people living overseas who are harmed by human rights abuses (65%) or environmental damage (62%) through UK business supply chains should be able to seek justice in UK courts, an option not currently available for most corporate crime victims.

Baroness Young of Hornsey, patron of Anti-Slavery International and proposer of a new Private Members’ Bill requiring companies to prevent human rights abuses and environmental harm in their supply chains, soon to have its second reading, said:

“Whether it’s the water pollution of our precious waterways or modern slavery, it’s clear that people want tough regulation – and its benefits are also recognised by businesses. It gives them legal certainty and a level playing field to remain competitive.”

Dan Leader, trustee of the Corporate Justice Coalition and partner with legal firm Leigh Day, is involved in the ongoing legal case against Shell for environmental damage in the Niger Delta.

“The Shell case is just one example of the serious harms caused by irresponsible companies globally. It’s taken ten years to even start to get justice for the Ogale and Bille communities and the case is still unresolved. Until companies are held legally accountable in UK law, human rights abuses and environmental devastation will continue. It’s clear that the UK public want corporate impunity to end,” he said.

Clare Oxborrow, corporate accountability campaigner at Friends of the Earth, a member of the Corporate Justice Coalition said:

“Climate and ecosystem breakdown are a major threat to human rights, disproportionately impacting the most marginalised and vulnerable communities around the world. A new UK environmental and human rights due diligence law would help tackle these interconnected crises and help to redress the power imbalance between powerful corporations and affected people, wherever they operate.”

The polling coincides with the release of a new investor and business statement published today calling for new and urgent legislation. 167 investors, businesses and associations back a new UK environmental and human rights due diligence law based on the ‘failure to prevent’ model as enshrined in the UK Bribery Act.

Joke Aerts, who leads Tony's Open Chain, the open-source platform which supports sustainable cocoa sourcing, signatory for Tony's Chocolonely, said:

“Businesses have a responsibility to respect human rights, but many don’t do so voluntarily. We need a new law to enforce it and using the Bribery Act model is a key element to make it effective. We urge the UK to show leadership on the environment and human rights.”

Countries such as [France](https://corporatejustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/french-corporate-duty-of-vigilance-law-faq-1.pdf), [Germany](https://www.bmas.de/EN/Services/Press/recent-publications/2021/act-on-corporate-due-diligence-in-supply-chains.html) and the EU, have already passed or are soon to pass similar legislation, and a [pledge](https://www.goodbusinessmatters.org/decision-makers) in support of a new law has cross-party support from parliamentarians from eight political parties. The Bribery Act model for a new law is recommended by Parliament’s [Joint Committee on Human Rights](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201617/jtselect/jtrights/443/443.pdf) and backed by 38 [civil society organisations and trades unions](https://corporatejusticecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/CJC-BHREA-Principles-1.pdf) including Anti-Slavery International, UNISON, Oxfam, Amnesty International and Friends of the Earth.

More than [120,000 people](https://corporatejusticecoalition.org/our-campaigns/due-diligence-law/) in the UK have signed a petition calling for a new law to hold companies accountable for failing to prevent human rights abuses and environmental destruction in supply chains.

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For more information, including the details of the polling, or to interview spokespeople, contact Luise Schroter on 07503470360 or Luise.schroter@cjcoalition.org.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

* For case studies of UK company supply chains linked to environmental harm and human rights abuses see “[Bridging the Gap – How could a UK Business, Human Rights and Environment Act have made a difference?](https://corporatejusticecoalition.org/resources/reports/bridging-the-gap-how-could-a-uk-business-human-rights-and-environment-act-have-made-a-difference/)”
* Baroness Young introduced her House of Lords Private Members Bill titled the “[Commercial Organisations and Public Authorities Duty (Human Rights and Environment) Bill](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CLuiseSchroter%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5C87I2OKNX%5Ctitled%20the%20Commercial%20Organisations%20and%20Public%20Authorities%20Duty%20%28Human%20Rights%20and%20Environment%29%20Bill%2C)” in November last year. It is due to be debated during its second reading in May or June, if scheduled.
* The ‘failure to prevent’ model reverses the burden of proof. Businesses are held liable for failing to prevent harm from happening but it can be a defence to show that human rights and environmental due diligence was conducted. The model has been used in the UK Bribery Act, Criminal Finance Act, and Environmental Crime and Corporate Transparency Act. The model has been recommended by Parliament’s [Joint Committee on Human Rights](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201617/jtselect/jtrights/443/443.pdf) and was identified as legally feasible by the [British Institute of International and Comparative Law](https://www.biicl.org/documents/84_failure_to_prevent_final_10_feb.pdf).
* The Corporate Justice Coalition is a coalition of civil society organisations and trade unions, advocating for corporate accountability for human rights abuses, labour rights abuses and environmental destruction.
* An [environmental briefing](https://corporatejusticecoalition.org/resources/briefings/a-business-human-rights-and-environment-act-due-diligence-to-protect-the-environment-and-achieve-a-just-transition-in-global-value-chains/) explaining how a legal framework tackling change, environmental pollution and human rights could work is published today by a coalition of civil society organisations and the UK’s largest trade union, UNISON, in readiness for the second reading of the Private Member’s Bill.
* All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,124 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th - 7th April 2024. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).
* The new investor and business statement has been signed by 167 investors, businesses and alliances. It includes more than 150 investors, including Triodos Bank, London CIV and CCLA, representing over £1.4 trillion in assets under management. Business signatories include Tony’s Chocolonely, TFG London and the Princes Group.
* [Businesses](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/uk-business-support-for-human-rights-due-diligence-legislation/) including the British Retail Consortium, Primark and Tesco, among many others, have previously called for a new law to ‘level the playing field’ as have Legal and General among other [investors](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/investor-letter-for-uk-human-rights-due-diligence/).