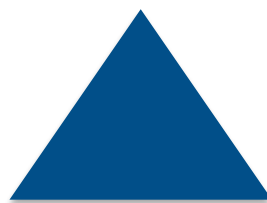




Institute ^{for}
European
Environmental
Policy **UK**

IEEP UK Strategy

2023 – 2027



► Foreword

This strategy paper marks the consolidation of IEEP UK's work and approach as the dust has settled since the UK's departure from the European Union in 2020. It marks the renewal of an environmental organisation that is as old as European environmental policy itself. It sets out a new focus and set of objectives fit for purpose in the new, still evolving, multi-nation UK context.

The challenge is clear. Environmental policy in the UK has been intertwined with Europe since the beginning of our membership of the European Economic Community in 1973. Much of what we take for granted in Britain to protect our air, water, land, human health, and natural habitats owes its origins to policies originating in Brussels. Influenced by the UK, to be sure, but European environmental policy is a collective endeavour. The Institute for European Environmental Policy has been an influential part of this journey of policy development for over 40 years.

In 1987 when the EEC Treaty acquired a chapter on the environment for the very first time, Margaret Thatcher's minister for the environment, William Waldegrave, wrote in an IEEP publication: "After 15 years of policy making – some very important – we have come of age!" He credited IEEP for "educating us about the European dimension for many years" and acknowledged that IEEP's Handbook on European environmental policy in Britain had "become a standard work of reference for those working on environmental protection."

Fast forward to 2023 and Britain has now left the European Union. The context is different, but policymaking has not stood still. The UK has been preoccupied with setting new net zero targets, and in England, the passage of the Environment Act 2021 and resolving internal differences over the Retained EU Law (REUL) Act 2023. In the EU, environmental policy making has accelerated under the European Green Deal and become ever more integrated with industrial policy to aid post-Covid economic recovery, address climate change and energy security, prepare for a new net zero, circular economy based on digital and green skills, and promote nature restoration and social wellbeing.

What do these developments mean for the UK's relationship with our nearest neighbour, and vice versa? In this new context, well-informed, non-partisan policy insights are needed more than ever. With a foot in each camp, and decades of experience, IEEP is uniquely placed to interpret trends and advise governments, parliaments, regulatory bodies, local authorities, business, civil society organisations and others, grappling with the transition to more sustainable societies.

To address this new reality, IEEP has established a separate sister entity, IEEP Aisbl in Brussels and readjusted our focus in the UK to concentrate on new threats to and opportunities for environmental advancement. This paper charts our new strategy in the UK for this next phase of IEEP's work, which will concentrate on the new and changing dynamics both between the UK and the EU, as well as within the nations of the UK itself, where the potential environmental significance of emerging choices over divergence and alignment is coming to the fore.

Our mission remains to “advance the education of the public in the protection of the environment in the continent of Europe and in all forms of national and international policy in relation thereto.” Our role remains as IEEP founder, Konrad von Moltke, defined ‘to inform and guide’ policy makers and others based on independent, evidence-based, high-quality research.

Just as IEEP’s Manual of European Environmental Policy - the brainchild of Nigel Haigh, founder of IEEP’s London office – provided insight and comparative analysis for a generation of UK and European policymakers, our UK-EU Divergence Tracker is designed as a vital tool to inform the next generation of policymaking. Seeking to ensure that decisions taken are based on the best available understanding, benchmark against best practice and provide demonstrable gains for people, planet and place.

The need is clear and IEEP’s relevance remains more vital than ever.

The UK’s Environment Act 2021 now functions as a new framework for environmental protection with new powers to set binding targets, including for air quality, water, biodiversity, and waste reduction. As with the UK’s climate change and net zero targets, ambition is high, but policy development is lagging and coherence across the four nations is lacking. This is where IEEP is well placed to deploy our long-standing UK-EU environmental policy expertise, relationship with UK and European institutions and networks, to convene dialogues and explore policy alternatives which help deliver the UK’s policy priorities and enhance the wider European as well as the domestic environment.

Our IEEP UK strategy sets out how we will do this: focusing on working across the four nations as well as the UK level to support progress, and externally with the EU and the rest of Europe. As the UK’s relationship with the EU continues to evolve and as this next phase of our work develops, we look forward to working in partnership with governments, local authorities, regulators, business, civil society, academia, and others to bring knowledge and analysis to the places where it is needed.

In so doing, we look forward to writing the next chapter of our country and the European continent’s environmental journey with you.



Malini Mehra
Chair of IEEP UK Trustees

July 2023



1. External context

The UK is in a critical phase both in the creation and implementation of environmental policies and targets outside the EU and in the development of policies to deliver the Net Zero and nature restoration commitments. We are well into the decade in which definitive action must be taken to address the environmental crisis. To meet targets set already and those due to be adopted this year will require an active and sustained programme of policy development.

This programme needs to be taken forward within a much stronger devolved framework for environmental issues, with distinctive approaches developing in the four nations and a new challenge in terms of cooperation and coherence at the UK level. New governance arrangements, not all complete, will be tested. The outlook is far from straightforward. Despite some political signals of increased UK ambition in relation to climate and biodiversity, there is also uncertainty over delivery stemming from economic headwinds. The outcome of the General Election in 2024 will have its own implications for environmental policy, the relationship with the EU and between devolved nations.

The volume and significance of the decisions that need to be made over the next few years is striking. There are opportunities for creative innovation and genuine world leadership if the ambition is sustained in the face of other priorities and translated into action. Effective policies and investment plans need to be adopted soon despite budgetary pressures. Similar challenges apply in other parts of Europe and there are opportunities to cooperate and to learn from one another, especially with signs of a rapprochement in relations between the EU and the UK. However, despite the opportunities for closer cooperation, tensions are likely to remain between the case for staying in close step with EU policy, the foundation of most environmental legislation in the UK, and the current Government's desire to establish distinctively different approaches, including its focus on removing EU derived legislation from the statute book.

2. Role for IEEP UK

As a sustainability think tank with over 40 years' experience IEEP UK is committed to assessing, informing and shaping long-term and effective environmental policies at a UK and European level through evidence-based research, analysis and policy insights. Functioning independently in the UK from 2022 as IEEP UK, we continue to operate as part of the broader IEEP family, ensuring the UK

benefits from intelligence, research and experience from other countries to develop the most effective policy options.

IEEP's ambition for the UK is as follows:

By 2028 for the UK and its four constituent nations to have strong, long-term, coherent and effective environmental and climate policies that are fit for purpose to address current and future anticipated challenges and are well implemented and enforced.

Given the context set out above, IEEP UK will continue to work as part of the UK's broader environmental community, using our knowledge of European policy developments to provide independent analysis, evidence and policy insights. We are trusted to convene and broker discussions between different actors to shape the development and implementation of this new generation of policies and the governance alongside them in the various parts of the UK at a time of exceptional change.

We will work with colleagues and partners to develop the evidence base in the UK to inform and shape emerging policies. This includes active cooperation with our sister organisation in Brussels ([IEEP aisbl](#)) and other European partners through the [Think Sustainable Europe](#) (TSE) network, sharing thinking on the best new ideas and sources of evidence.

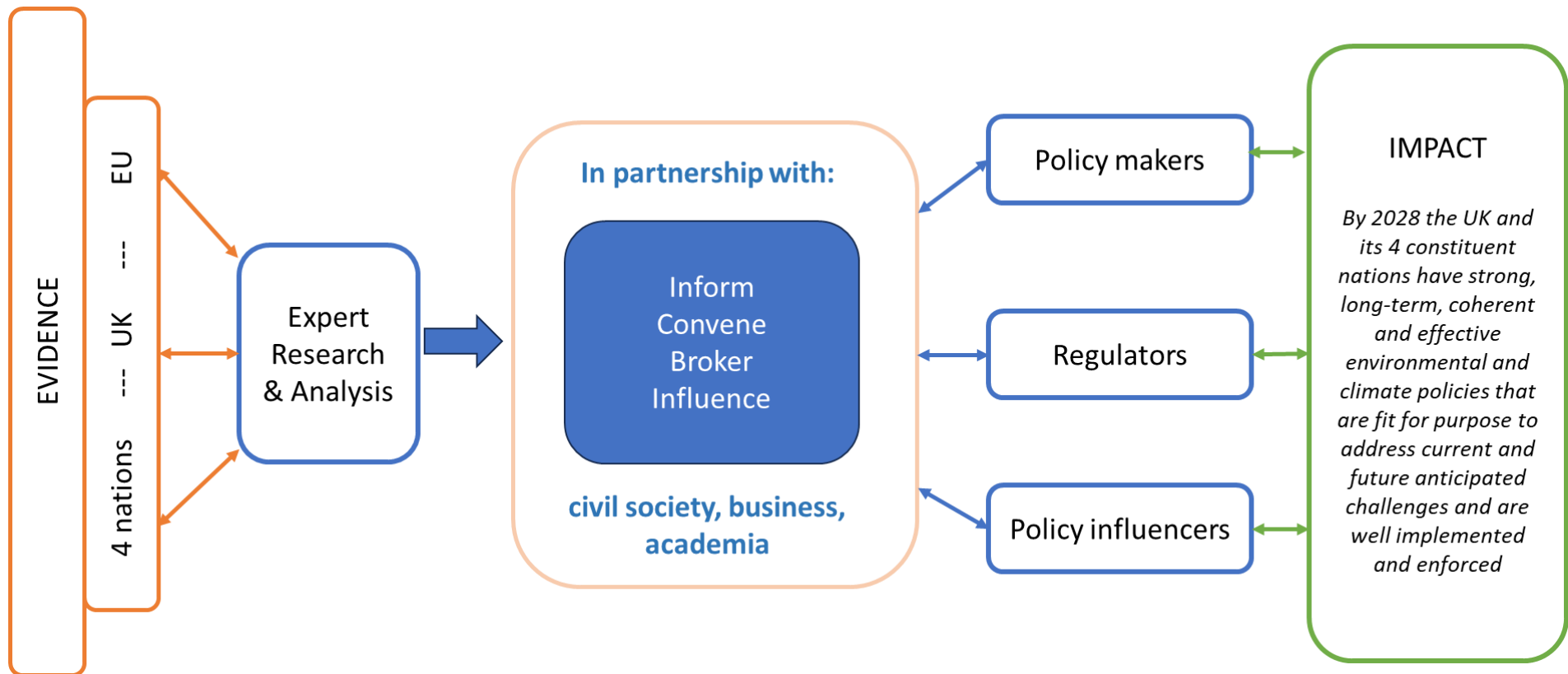
Our long standing four-nation perspective and engagement with developments in the EU will inform our approach to UK issues but we can also draw on many years of experience of UK policy making amongst the Institute's senior staff and associates. We will be looking at policy issues from a UK perspective but bringing skills and knowledge developed on a larger European scale as well, to ensure knowledge is brought to the places where it matters.

3. Model of Change

Our model of change has evolved from the way we operated in the EU and is applied to the UK context. It is set out in Figure 1 and can be summarised as follows:

- We focus strictly on policy rather than more technical analysis, and track policy developments closely;

- We take an overview of the full range environmental and climate policy, identify risks, gaps and opportunities for positive change from a sustainability perspective and then focus on those specific issues;
- We operate at the science-policy interface, translating technical information and data to be accessible and policy-relevant;
- We effect change through ensuring the latest research and best examples of effective policies reach policy makers. We do this through:
 - **Conducting rigorous research and analysis** to produce evidence-based insights and solutions, engaging with decision makers and framing conclusions to maximise impact – we produce reports, briefings, discussion papers, blogs, host webinars and ensure they reach those that can act on them.
 - **Convening/brokering discussions** between relevant players (e.g. public bodies, sectoral interests, environmental NGOs, government) to agree action – although we are clearly ‘green’ in focus, we operate as a relatively ‘neutral’ player to bring those with differing opinions together to have frank exchange.
 - **Working with partners and in partnership to inform and shape policy debates**, both directly where this is appropriate as well as empowering others, especially environmental NGOs, to do so.
 - Playing an active role in **Think Sustainable Europe**, a pan-European network of sustainability thinktanks founded by our sister organisation IEEP aisbl in Brussels, to share best practice and raise environmental ambition.

Figure 1: **IEEP UK's Model of Change**

4. IEEP UK's thematic focus for 2023-2027

Our work will be built around two main themes for the period 2023-2027:

1. **Analysing and managing the implications of divergence in environmental policy: UK/EU and between the four UK nations**

We will support the UK in becoming an environmental leader in the UK and globally. This workstream was launched in 2022 to track the evolution of environmental policy in the EU and the four parts of the UK to examine how these diverge over time. The purpose is to highlight emerging differences, analyse the environmental implications of these differences, flagging areas where there is evidence of backsliding and/or greater ambition with a view to generating a race to the top both between the UK and EU and within the UK. We will continue this work, building on the expertise we have developed.

Alongside tracking and highlighting changes in environmental policy via our established tracker system, we will continue to develop our 'hub' of civil society, academic, business and other experts to exchange knowledge and agree action to generate a race to the top in environmental policy.

The thematic focus of this workstream will evolve over time and cover those areas where changes proposed are likely to present the greatest opportunity or risk to the environment and broader sustainability agenda.

2. **Promoting a more coherent, strategic approach to environmental policy in the UK**

We will inform policy developments in the four parts of the UK so that together they are fit for purpose to enable environmental objectives and targets to be met.

At present there are major initiatives within each of the four nations, such as Net Zero plans and the 5-year Environmental Improvement Plans that will be central to progress in England under the terms of the Environment Act. However, there are questions about how these will work together, how they are made coherent with cross-cutting policies, such as trade, and how sectoral policies, such as agriculture, fisheries, research, digitalisation, will work together to contribute to a cohesive approach and truly green economy. Stronger governance arrangements will be part of the solution to these challenges, and this is an area where we plan to develop forward thinking solutions across the policy spectrum in the UK.

Under this theme we will focus initially on three specific areas, playing to our current areas of thematic expertise:

- Agriculture and Land Use, with a focus on building new and more integrated land use and agricultural policies within the four nations of the UK (incorporating climate, biodiversity, water, soil and food issues);
- Circular economy, including waste management, industrial pollution and chemicals; and
- Environmental Governance – focusing on systems and structures, including issues such as environmental principles, Retained EU legislation, targets and data, monitoring and reporting, to ensure environmental improvements are delivered.

5. Communications

Good communications are key for maximising our impact on UK environmental policy and delivering the objectives and vision set out above. We will work with a variety of stakeholders broadening our reach and partnership to include devolved administrations, local authorities, business and media, in addition to our traditional partners in national government, regulatory bodies, civil society and academia.

IEEP UK will continue the process of developing its own communications channels and communications material that has been underway since 2022 following the creation of IEEP aisbl in 2019. Over the period 2023-27 IEEP UK will invest in expanding its communications activities to ensure that its voice is heard in the UK environmental policy debates; that our outputs are successfully disseminated; and that we are influencing the development of key policies in the four nations of the UK. Detailed communication objectives for the strategy period have been developed.

6. Organisational development

The 2023-27 period is planned as a period of growth for IEEP UK. The organisation started operating, and securing income, independently from our sister organisation in Brussels (IEEP AISBL) using our reserves in 2022. In 2023 – 24 we will use a proportion of our reserves to begin delivering this Strategy as we generate new sources of income.

To deliver the goals and activities identified above, we have to grow and increase our capacity so that we can maximise our impact. Our plan for growth is dependent on the success of the model above and being able to secure sufficient funding to make this work.

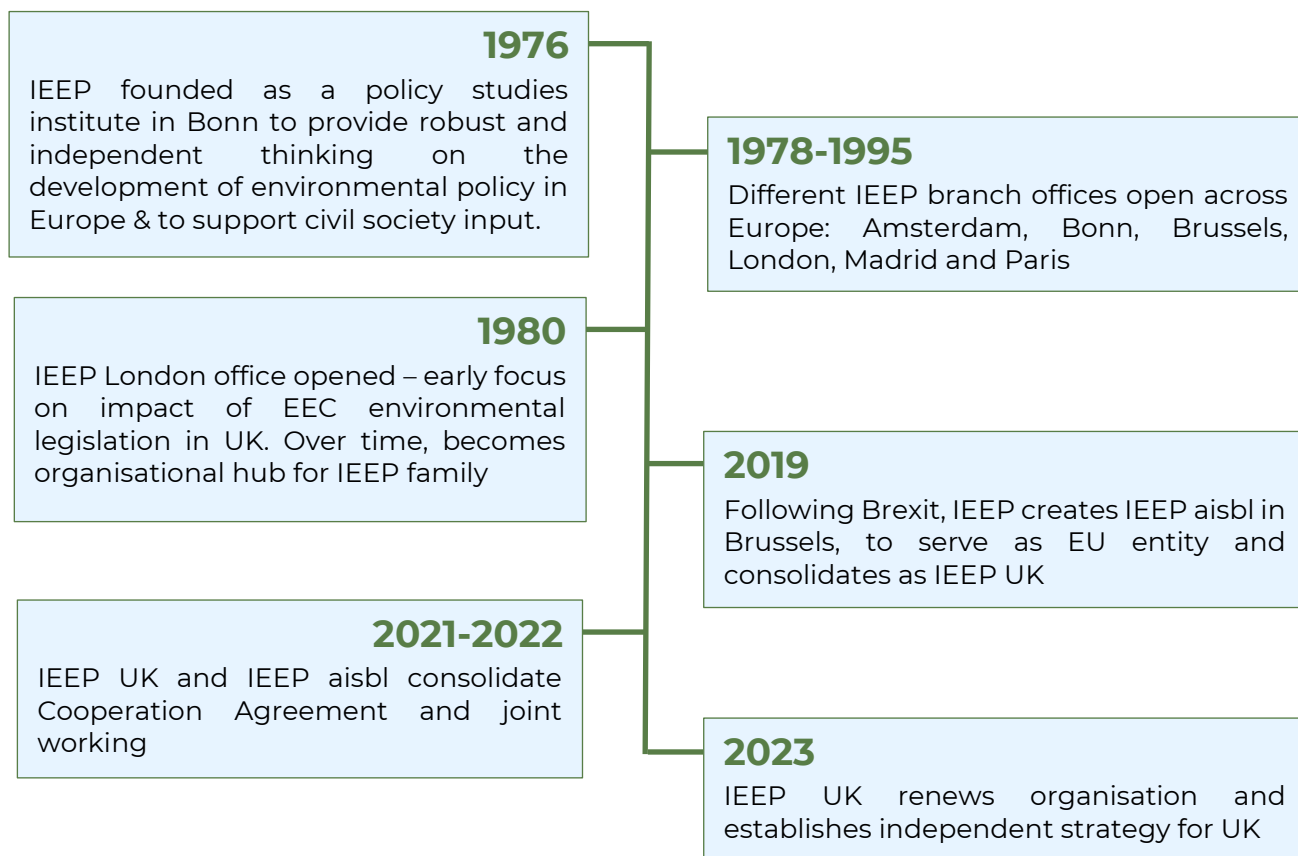
A plan for growth has been developed and will be refined based on funding. It involves gradual recruitment of analyst capacity as well as operational support and senior leadership over the strategy period.

We will invest in training for staff, both existing staff and new recruits as they come on board. We will also formalise the current network of Associates and 'Friends of IEEP UK' who carry out research and influencing work, but also share their experiences, contacts and advice on environmental law and policy in the UK to inform IEEP's development.

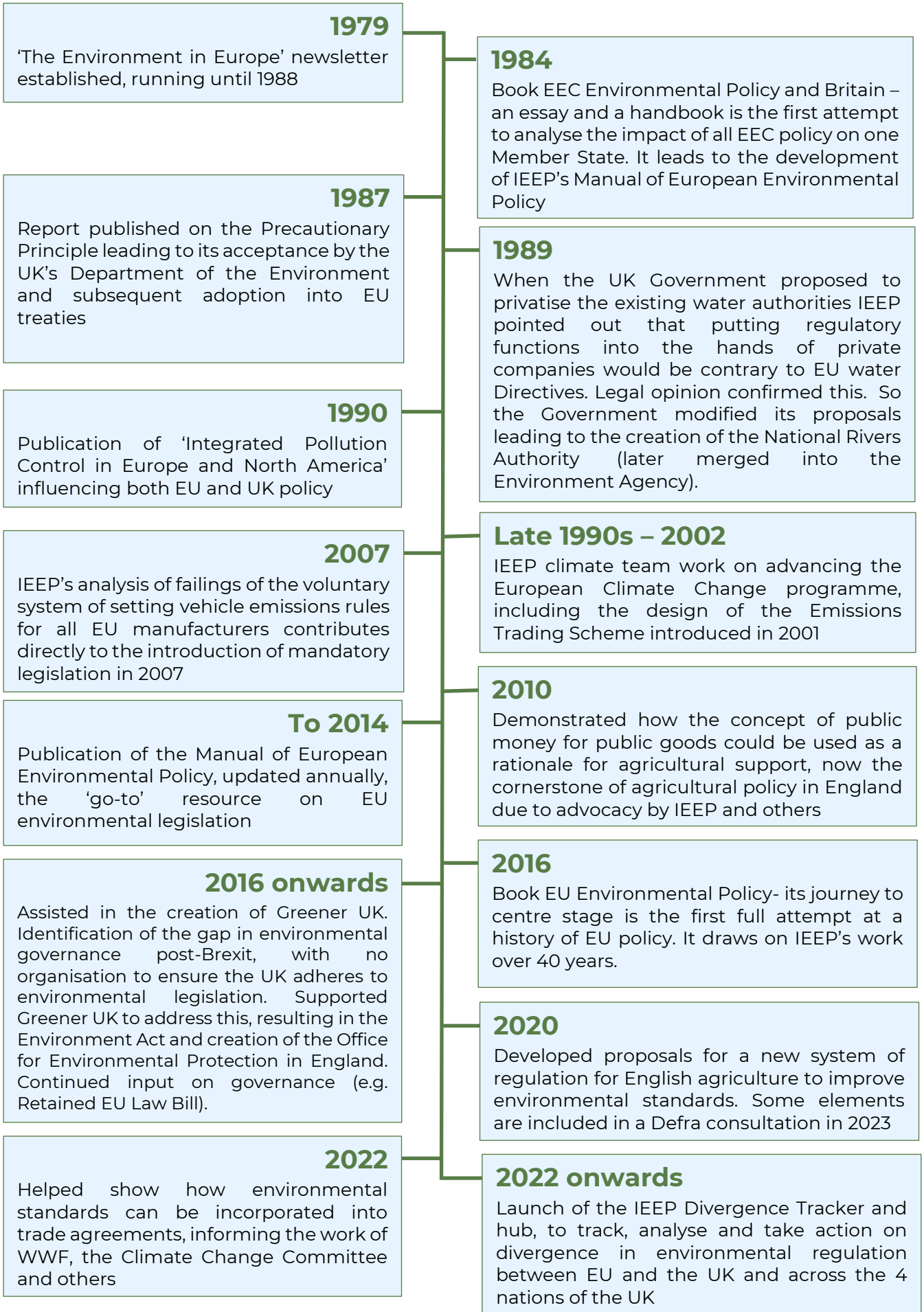
We will also continue to build strategic alliances with UK bodies that have expressed an interest in closer working with IEEP on UK issues. This includes local authorities, thinktanks, academics, businesses and civil society as well as renewing our relationship with consultancies with whom we have worked in the past and where our interests align.

7. Organisational Timeline, Impact & Achievements

IEEP organisational timeline



IEEP Impacts & Achievements



8. Our Values

IEEP UK operates under the general IEEP Code of Ethics, which applies to staff, associates and the work we do with partners. Our code has the following guiding principles, adapted to the UK.



9. What Others Say

Caroline Lucas MP:

'Both as an MEP and MP I have drawn on IEEP's insightful work. I am delighted that IEEP UK has re-emerged at such a critical time for the UK and global environment.'

Richard Benwell, CEO, Wildlife and Countryside Link:

'IEEP UK's comparative analysis of biodiversity targets across the UK and the EU is superb and is informing the work of organisations across the environment sector.'

Dr Viviane Gravey, Queens University, Belfast:

'IEEP UK's Divergence tracker is proving highly useful in highlighting how environmental policies are changing across the UK (both internally and vis-à-vis the EU), and identifying areas where action needs to be taken to improve coherence.'

Shaun Spiers - Green Alliance:

'IEEP UK's input to Greener UK since it was established after the referendum, in particular the knowledge of both EU and UK policy, has been a vital element of its success.'

[For more information, please contact:](#)

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