

Britain risks losing green protections after Brexit

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A coalition of environmental groups says there is a "significant risk" that British environmental protections will be reduced after Brexit, despite the government's positive rhetoric.

Greener UK, which represents 13 campaign groups including WWF, National Trust, RSPB, Friends of the Earth, Green Alliance and the Wildlife Trusts, says there are "serious concerns" that the government will not cooperate with the European Union after Brexit on environmental issues

which need international agreement. Although the environment secretary, Michael Gove, has made several announcements, such as the 5p levy on plastic bottles, Greener UK believes there may be a "lack of willpower to ensure high standards across the UK".

Shaun Spiers, the chairman of Greener UK and executive director of Green Alliance, praised Gove as a "highly engaged and effective environment secretary" and welcomed the prime minister's promise to put the environment at the centre of government policy.

"Yet these green aspirations have

not carried over to the government's narrative on Brexit," Spiers said. "There are serious concerns about the level of future co-operation between the UK government and the EU, and the impact this will have on issues such as climate change and air quality. We also fear there is a lack of willpower to ensure high standards across the UK when we lose the common frameworks currently provided by the EU."

The warning comes as a rebel Conservative MEP told the *Observer* the UK was no longer working effectively with the EU on environmental

issues. Julie Girling had the Tory whip withdrawn when she supported a European Parliament resolution saying the UK had not made sufficient progress in talks with the EU.

She said: "Since before the June 2016 referendum they have stopped engaging with MEPs. People in the European council and commission have told me that's the case for them as well."

"Until I had the whip withdrawn, we [Conservative MEPs] were told that it's business as usual, we're still a member, but that's not been the case for the government."