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Wildlife
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Local to **Global**

The Global Biodiversity Framework and
what the UK needs to do to implement it

The Global Biodiversity Framework

The sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will take place in Cali, Colombia from 21st October to the 1st November 2024¹.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is a vitally important global treaty. The world's biodiversity is fast decreasing and action is urgently needed to prevent ecological collapse. The 2021 Dasgupta Review of The Economics of Biodiversity, commissioned by HM Treasury warns that "our unsustainable engagement with nature is **endangering the prosperity of current and future generations**"². A recent report found that nature degradation could cause a 12% loss to UK GDP³ and stressed the need to recognise and address these risks to strengthen the UK's financial resilience. As with climate change, a global approach is needed to tackle the problem.

In 2010, a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity was agreed with 20 targets (the Aichi targets) to be achieved by 2020⁴. Implementation was disappointing. At a global level, none of the targets were fully achieved and in the UK, nature continued to decline⁵.

Following this, a new Global Biodiversity Framework was agreed at the last Conference of the Parties (COP 15), in Montreal Canada, December 2022. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework put forward a new bold plan with the express aim to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. Among the Framework's key elements are four goals for 2050:

Ecosystems are restored and extinctions halted

Goal **A**

Biodiversity is used sustainably

Goal **B**

Genetic resources are protected and shared equitably

Goal **C**

Adequate resources are put in place to implement the Global Biodiversity Framework

Goal **D**

To put the world on course to meet these goals, the Framework sets out 23 action-oriented global targets to be completed by 2030. Perhaps the best known of these is target three – to protect and manage 30% of land, inland waters and seas by 2030 (often referred to as "30x30"). The actions set out in each target need to be initiated immediately by national governments and completed by the end of the decade (see Figure 1).

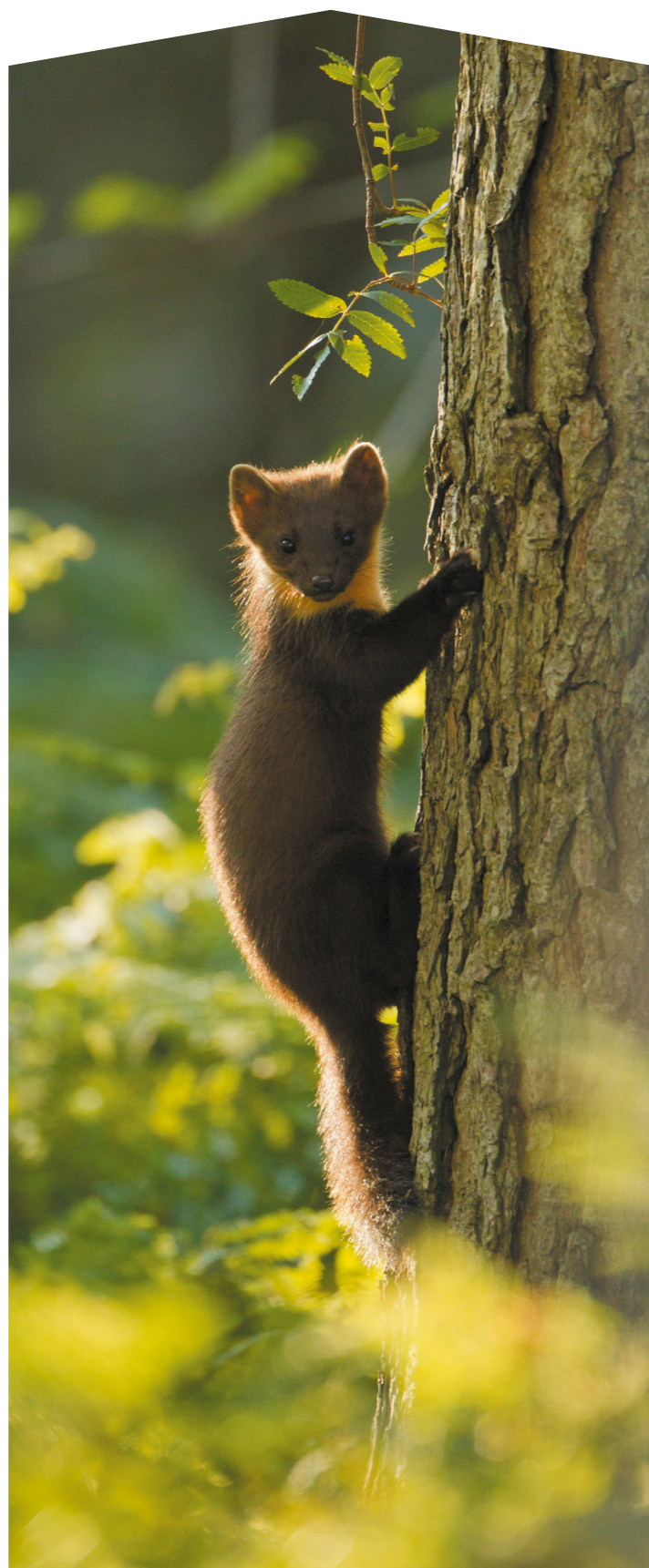


Figure 1: Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Themes and Targets

Reducing threats to biodiversity	1	Spatial planning to reduce land and sea use change	2	Restoration of degraded ecosystems	3	Protect and conserve areas	4	Halting species extinctions and reducing extinction risk
	5	Harvesting and trade of wild species	6	Managing invasive non-native species	7	Reducing negative impact of pollution on biodiversity	8	Minimise impacts of climate change
Meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing	9	Management of wild species	10	Agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forests are sustainably managed	11	Restore, maintain and enhance nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services	12	Urban blue and green spaces
	13	Fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources and digital sequence information	14	Integrate biodiversity and its multiple values into policies, regulations, planning and development processes	15	Integrate legal, administrative or policy measures within business and financial institutions	16	Encourage and enable sustainable consumption choices
Tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming	17	Establish, strengthen capacity for, and implement biosafety measures	18	Identify and eliminate, phase out or reform incentives, including subsidies	19	Substantially and progressively increase the level of financial resources	20	Strengthen capacity-building and technical scientific cooperation
	21	Ensure data, information and knowledge are accessible to decision makers, practitioners and the public	22	Respecting rights and cultures of Indigenous peoples and local communities	23	Ensure gender equality	Global Biodiversity Framework	

The upcoming COP16 will be the first opportunity for the world to take stock of monitoring and progress towards the Global Biodiversity Framework, and for the new UK Government to demonstrate its intentions for bold and ambitious action for nature at home and on the international stage.

Despite often being a key player on the international stage for both climate and biodiversity, including spearheading the Leaders Pledge for Nature in 2020⁶, the UK has not backed this up with implementation at home. The UK's international environmental leadership threatens to be undermined by the fact that the UK Government is on track to meet only four of its 40 individual domestic environmental targets⁷ and remains one of the most nature-depleted countries on the planet.

The upcoming COP16 represents a chance for the new UK Government to think globally while it acts locally; putting in place the highest possible level of ambition to implement the Global Biodiversity Framework nationally. This has been recognised by the UK Government's Environment Secretary, Steve Reed, who has said: "We want to reset the approach, raise ambition and renew momentum... We need to show leadership on climate and nature at home, so we have the credibility to lead internationally."⁸

Now is the time to move from inspiring words to ambitious action on the ground. The UK Government must present a bold action plan ahead of COP16 to show it is doing its part and to re-establish its role as a global environmental leader.

The new goals and targets in the Global Biodiversity Framework go way beyond the ambition of those agreed in 2010, with a welcome focus on bending the curve of nature loss, rather than just halting its decline. This report looks where implementation is urgently needed to ensure nature's recovery by the end of the decade under the three target headings of **reducing threats to biodiversity**; **meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing**, and **tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming**.

Overall responsibility for fulfilling the UK's commitments as a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity lies with the UK Government. However, as environmental policy is a devolved function, the four countries of the UK are each responsible for developing their own approaches towards meeting biodiversity commitments. This report looks at actions the UK Government should take to implement the Global Biodiversity Framework and therefore mainly makes recommendations for policy in England.

Reducing threats to biodiversity

Targets

- 1 Plan and manage all areas to reduce biodiversity loss**
- 2 Restore 30% of all degraded ecosystems**
- 3 Conserve 30% of land, waters and seas**
- 4 Halt species extinction, protect genetic diversity and manage human-wildlife conflicts**
- 5 Ensure sustainable, safe and legal harvesting and trade of wild species**
- 6 Reduce the introduction of invasive alien species by 50% and minimise their impact**
- 7 Reduce pollution to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity**
- 8 Minimise the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and build resilience**

Over the last 50 years, nature across the UK has become damaged and degraded, with biodiversity decreasing in abundance decade after decade. The State of Nature Report 2023 showed that species abundance has declined on average by 19% since 1970, with even greater declines seen in insect populations. It also reports that nearly one in six species are now threatened with extinction from Great Britain⁹.

Unsustainable agricultural practices and climate change have had the greatest impact, whilst pollution and the impacts of development are a growing factor in declines.

Millions fewer birds, mammals and fish live in our skies, our rivers, our seas, meaning nature is now struggling to provide the services we take for granted: crop pollination, flood water absorption, carbon sequestration, clean water.

This decline is reversible. The knowledge and skills exist to restore nature, but strong political will is needed to make this a reality. Action is needed everywhere – to manage the sites already designated for their nature value and bring them back into good condition, to restore degraded habitats and to manage the wider landscape – rural, urban and marine – so that nature can thrive alongside other land and sea use.

Spatial planning

Targets **1 3 4 8**

Space in the UK is finite and there are many competing aspirations for how our land and seas should be used. A national strategic, spatial approach to planning the use of both is needed to reduce and avoid conflict. This approach needs to be fully cross-departmental to ensure policies for planning, transport, energy, food and nature are all aligned.

Actions

- In England, the UK Government must publish comprehensive, cross-departmental, national spatial plans for land and sea:
 - A Land Use Framework with robust links to the planning process, that shows how and where 30% of land will be effectively conserved and restored by 2030, and includes adaptation and mitigation for climate change. It should comprise an overarching framework to guide prioritisation for land use change and a national spatial plan that broadly identifies constraints and opportunities for land use.
 - A marine spatial plan that uses an ecosystem approach to balance the needs of current and future generations. It should integrate all activities to avoid unintentional harm and maximise the benefits of healthy marine ecosystems. In particular, the UK Government's mission to deliver clean power by 2030 must be achieved in a nature-positive way, avoiding harm to marine biodiversity; we cannot solve one global crisis by making another worse.
- Changes to the planning system in England must deliver for nature, climate and people. Protections for nature in the planning system must be maintained and the UK Government should amend the National Planning Policy Framework to strengthen protection of Local Wildlife Sites.
- The planning system should also support the development of comprehensive Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which identify local land use priorities through consensus and stack up to meet national targets through the Land Use Framework. The duty to take account of Local Nature Recovery Strategies needs to be well implemented through proper guidance to ensure local development avoids key nature sites.



Meeting 30x30 and species recovery

Targets **2 3 4 7**

Nature needs more space managed for its recovery and connected to allow species room to adapt to a changing climate. The science shows that to turn the tide on nature's decline, we need to protect and manage at least 30% of lands, fresh waters and oceans by 2030 (30x30).

30x30 is the biggest conservation commitment the world has ever seen. To date, more than 190 countries have committed to achieving the global goal. The UK Government has recently reiterated its commitment to achieving this pledge in England in its publication of national contributions towards the Global Biodiversity Framework targets.

However, analysis shows that only 3.1% of land in England is effectively protected and managed for nature, whilst a maximum of 8% of English seas could be said to be protected for nature¹⁰. Landscape-scale habitat creation is needed, linked by corridors and stepping stones of wild places throughout our cities and countryside. Practices that damage nature must be minimised to enable nature to recover.

Actions

- A cross-government delivery project is needed to protect and restore at least 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, in line with international standards. A new Wildbelt designation to protect sites that are in recovery for nature should be introduced to accelerate progress towards the target. This is a chance to capture the public's imagination by connecting the existing tools to make more space for nature, such as Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape Recovery schemes, and new rewilding sites, under a single, new designation to deliver positive change for people and nature.
- The suite of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) should be improved and completed to include all areas that meet the criteria, not just a representative selection. Sites must be effectively conserved and managed, making clear progress towards getting 75% of sites into good condition by 2042.
- At sea, more Highly Protected Marine Areas, which prohibit damaging activities, must be designated to enable marine habitats to recover. Damage to Marine Protected Areas must be stopped, through a presumption against development within Marine Protected Areas, including offshore wind farms and byelaws that ban destructive practices.
- Seventy per cent of the UK is farmed; the way this land is managed has a huge impact on biodiversity. Funding for Environmental Land Management schemes should be increased to meet the scale of need and a greater proportion allocated to the Landscape Recovery component. The UK Government should also set out what contribution these schemes will make to 30x30, species recovery and other environmental targets.
- License wild beaver reintroductions in England – bringing wild beavers back to every county.
- Raise the ambition on Biodiversity Net Gain to secure a scheme that delivers actual gains for nature, rather than at best maintaining the status quo¹¹.

Tackling pollution

Target 7

Sewage, wastewater and agricultural pollution are all suffocating our rivers and the wildlife that depends on them. It is a problem that affects almost all our rivers, lakes and estuaries, particularly in England. The UK's seas are being poisoned by sewage discharges and river pollution is draining into them on a daily basis. The new UK Government should take the opportunity for a clear reset on this.

Chalk streams are particularly vulnerable. These unique rivers are some of the world's rarest habitats and over 85% of them are found in the UK. We have an international obligation to look after them, and yet they are often polluted and drained almost dry, killing the wildlife that relies on them.

In the farmed landscape, basic regulation to protect water quality is lacking and the requirement to introduce a new National Action Plan on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides is more than six years overdue. Cuts to regulatory agencies and environmental protection budgets over the past decade mean regulations are rarely enforced. Measures to tackle pollution are often piecemeal and not located where they would be the most effective. Improvements need to be targeted to ensure they are effective and represent best use of taxpayer funds.

Actions

- Enforce the law – reverse the trend of undermining and underresourcing our enforcement bodies, providing strong political support for bodies like Natural England and the Environment Agency, and empower and resource our environmental watchdogs to ensure they can monitor and inspect waterbodies and enforce penalties when the law is broken.
- Halve nutrient pollution by 2030 by using Environmental Land Management schemes to fund:
 - delivery of better buffers (substantial swales of grasses, wildflowers, shrubs and trees can trap farm pollution, provide shade to protect against climate stresses and create wildlife habitat),
 - measures that build up the vital organic parts of the soil, such as living organisms and fungi, that help improve soil structure to ensure it holds more water, and, and
 - create Catchment Nutrient Budgets to ensure that reductions are ecologically targeted.
- Put in policy that promotes large-scale river restoration, and supports the network of local river-catchment partnerships to deliver this
- A credible National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides that delivers an ambitious quantitative UK pesticide reduction target to reduce the overall use of – and risk from – chemical pesticides by 2030.

Taking action for nature and climate

Target 8

The climate and nature crises are intertwined. The climate crisis is driving nature's decline but nature is currently the only cost-effective mechanism of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, such as through woodland ecosystems, healthy peatlands and blue carbon. The ongoing loss of wildlife and its habitats is leaving the UK ill-equipped to capture carbon, reduce our emissions and adapt to change. Action on climate must be matched with determined efforts to fix our broken ecosystems.

The UK's peatlands, which store over three billion tonnes of carbon, are heavily degraded and are releasing rather than capturing carbon. Continuing with restoration efforts would stop this loss and boost populations of rare wildlife. Creating permanent woodland will also lock up carbon but must be carefully planned to maximise benefits and avoid harming other habitats. Soil organic matter stores more carbon than any other land system but is threatened by intensive farming. Crop rotation, cover crops and ploughing less can help to restore this fundamental asset.

Blue carbon is the term given to carbon stored in marine and coastal habitats – in the UK these include seagrass beds, saltmarsh and ocean sediments. Huge amounts of carbon are sequestered in the substrate and plants in these habitats. This should be locked up for centuries, but we are losing large areas every year. Protecting and restoring such habitats has social and economic benefits beyond carbon capture, for example providing nursery habitat for commercially important fish and helping to alleviate coastal flooding and erosion.

Actions

- Protect and restore peatlands – legislate to ban the extraction and sale of peat and peat-containing products, publish a peat action plan to restore the UK's peatland and finance this through continuation of the Nature for Climate Fund, which is ending in March 2025.
- Review and enhance the contribution of nature in achieving net zero: extend support for achieving woodland and peatland restoration targets, identify, monitor and protect blue carbon stores and widen scope to consider the role of broader carbon-rich habitats.
- Monitor and report on public and private sector investment in adaptation actions to protect nature and nature-based solutions and close the adaptation gap for nature. Embed climate adaptation and mitigation in the UK Government's Land Use Framework and Environmental Land Management schemes to support farmers to adapt to climate change, reduce emissions and protect soils.



Meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing

Targets

9 Manage wild species sustainably to benefit people

10 Enhance biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry

11 Restore, maintain and enhance nature's contributions to people

12 Enhance green spaces and urban planning for human well-being and biodiversity

13 Increase the sharing of benefits from genetic resources, digital sequence information and traditional knowledge

Supporting nature-friendly farming

Targets **9 10 18**

Our current global food production system is devastating our planet's natural systems, both on land and at sea. It is well documented that intensive agriculture in the UK is a major cause of nature loss and river pollution, but it is also failing our farmers who are being buffeted by the increasingly tangible impacts of a changing climate, exposure to volatile supply chains and inflationary pressures on agricultural inputs.

The destruction of nature and the impacts of climate change are also the biggest threats to food security in the UK. Food production relies on healthy soils, clean water, and resilience to climate change. Restoring nature on farms will bring many benefits, not just for wildlife but also for farmers. Working with nature can increase farm profits and resilience, reduce costs and maintain or even improve yields.

Many farmers and land managers have gone to great lengths to support wildlife without being adequately rewarded. The real terms value of the budget for environmental farming has already fallen by a third since 2010. Not investing properly means everyone loses.

Actions

- To reverse the decline of nature by 2030 and secure the UK's long term food security, the budget to support nature-friendly farming should be increased to at least £5.9 billion a year. Greater environmental ambition can also be achieved prioritising higher tier and landscape recovery schemes, ringfencing 50-60% of the budget to fund them.
- To reduce pollution and boost biodiversity, good practice must improve across the board. Instead of relying on voluntary measures, the UK Government should transition baseline practices, such as minimum water buffers and soil management, into regulation. This would ensure all farms contribute to baseline environmental protection.
- Investment in sustainable agriculture must also be guided by high-quality independent advice and facilitation. This can help farmers to properly implement practices to meet nature and climate targets and ensure public funds are being used efficiently.

Enabling healthy communities

Targets **11 12**

To value and protect nature, people first need to care about it, and to care about it they must experience it. To be truly transformational, this must be embedded in people's everyday experiences, not just on special outings. Nature helps people live healthier lives, but in the UK, access to these benefits is not equitable.

Evidence shows that access to nature is linked to big improvements in both physical and mental health and reduces health inequality². It is vital that everyone is able to take advantage of these benefits, but more than one third of the population – nearly 9.5 million households in England – are unable to access green places near their home³. Children who live in deprived areas are currently nine times less likely to have access to green spaces than those in the least deprived areas⁴. Contact with nature is beginning to be prescribed as part of the solution to health problems, through 'social prescribing'⁵. It is essential that there is sufficient natural green space within 15 minutes' walk to provide people with this opportunity. The resulting health benefits would mean significant savings for the NHS. In 2009 Natural England estimated that if everyone in England had access to green space, the resulting health benefits would mean that the NHS could save £2.1 billion⁶ per year. Updated for inflation that figure would now be £3 billion.

Actions

- Make green infrastructure standards mandatory. All new development should deliver one-third green cover and ensure everyone is a 15-minute walk or wheel from a nature space. Local Authorities should plan how to retrofit sufficient green space for existing communities using Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- Legislate for a right for people to have access to a healthy, natural environment.
- Enable all communities to access the health and well-being benefits of nature by committing to a cross-government fund to integrate social prescribing into health and social care and grow community-based health services and well-being programmes.
- Every child must have the right to learn in and about nature. Taking learning outdoors benefits children's mental health and develops a deeper appreciation for the environment and their role in protecting it. Building a lasting connection with nature in childhood shapes our adult lives and attitudes towards wildlife, climate change and how we choose to live. New statutory guidance to deliver learning outdoors for all can ensure our schools support happier, more confident children who understand their impact on our natural world.

Tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming

Targets

14 Integrate biodiversity in decision-making at every level

15 Businesses assess, disclose and reduce biodiversity-related risks and negative impacts

16 Enable sustainable consumption choices to reduce waste and overconsumption

17 Strengthen biosafety and distribute the benefits of biotechnology

18 Reduce harmful incentives by at least \$500 billion per year and scale up positive incentives for biodiversity

19 Mobilise \$200 billion per year for biodiversity from all sources, including \$30 billion through international finance

20 Strengthen capacity-building, technology transfer, and scientific and technical cooperation for biodiversity

21 Ensure that knowledge is available and accessible to guide biodiversity action

22 Ensure participation in decision-making and access to justice and information related to biodiversity for all

23 Ensure gender equality and a gender-responsive approach for biodiversity action

Integrating nature into decision making

Target **14**

The UK Government's long-term approach to protecting and enhancing the environment is set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. Although the plan primarily relates to England, parts of the plan have relevance across the UK. In 2023, the Office for Environmental Protection reported that the UK Government remained largely off-track to meet its environmental ambitions⁷.

The new UK Government has committed to review the Environmental Improvement Plan and will report by the end of the year. This review must follow the recommendations of the Office for Environmental Protection to speed up, scale up and show how its plans stack up to meet the environmental targets. The updated plan must set out clear delivery pathways for each commitment, strengthen these where necessary to ensure the delivery of international targets and outline the contribution each government department will make to achieving the targets.

The upcoming review of the Environmental Improvement Plan is also an opportunity to ensure plans and policies in England align with the Global Biodiversity Framework targets. Although each country will come up with their own plans outlining how the 2030 targets will be met, the UK's single submission to the CBD through the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) must identify gaps where new policy, action and finance is most needed to achieve the targets.

Actions

- Ensure that the updated Environmental Improvement Plan clearly sets out the policies and funding necessary to meet the Environment Act targets and commitments under the Global Biodiversity Framework.
- The UK Government should also look to take forward the recommendations in the Dasgupta Review to integrate biodiversity into economic and financial policy and decision-making, including national accounting.



Business and finance

Targets 15 19

With a clear action plan for implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework through the NBSAP, the UK will be well-placed to demonstrate ambitious leadership at the COP16 negotiations and ensure businesses can take positive steps to incorporate the environment into their decision making.

The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of nature. Analysis from the World Economic Forum estimates that half of all economic activity is moderately or highly dependent on nature¹⁸, with biodiversity loss one of the top four risks to the global economy over the next 10 years. However, the amount spent on activities that damage nature still far outstrips our spending to restore it.

There is a growing recognition of the importance of investing in our natural assets and the opportunities presented by a nature-based economy. Globally, the Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures will be a key driver for nature-positive innovation in finance. However, the UK Government must also set out how it will address the nature finance gap and scale up private and public funding through a new Green Finance Strategy.

Actions

- Following the success of the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosure, reporting to the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosure should be made mandatory for large companies and financial institutions to drive change and become the framework by which businesses report on their dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities.
- The UK Government must set robust standards with strong governance to drive the opportunities and confidence in high integrity ecosystem markets. The UK must also put forward a clear plan to deliver its fair share of the Global Biodiversity Framework commitment to mobilise 20 billion USD per year by 2025 in international biodiversity finance for developing countries.



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The Wildlife Trusts are a federation of 47 charities, 46 individual Wildlife Trusts and a central charity, the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts. Together we have more than 900,000 members, 39,000 volunteers and 3,600 staff across the UK. We share a vision of nature in recovery, with abundant, diverse wildlife and natural processes creating wilder landscapes where people and nature thrive.



Wildlife Trusts care for – and have restored – some of the most special places for wildlife in the UK. Collectively we manage more than 2,400 nature reserves, operate 123 visitor and education centres and own 29 working farms. We undertake research, we stand up for wildlife and wild places under threat, and we help people access nature.

We work with businesses who are committed to being nature positive and take action to help restore 30% of land and seas for nature by 2030.

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