

# 15. Funding for biodiversity

**Type:** Response indicator

## Indicator Description

The first part of this indicator provides real-term, public sector spending on biodiversity in England. Spending is just one way of assessing the government's commitment to biodiversity.

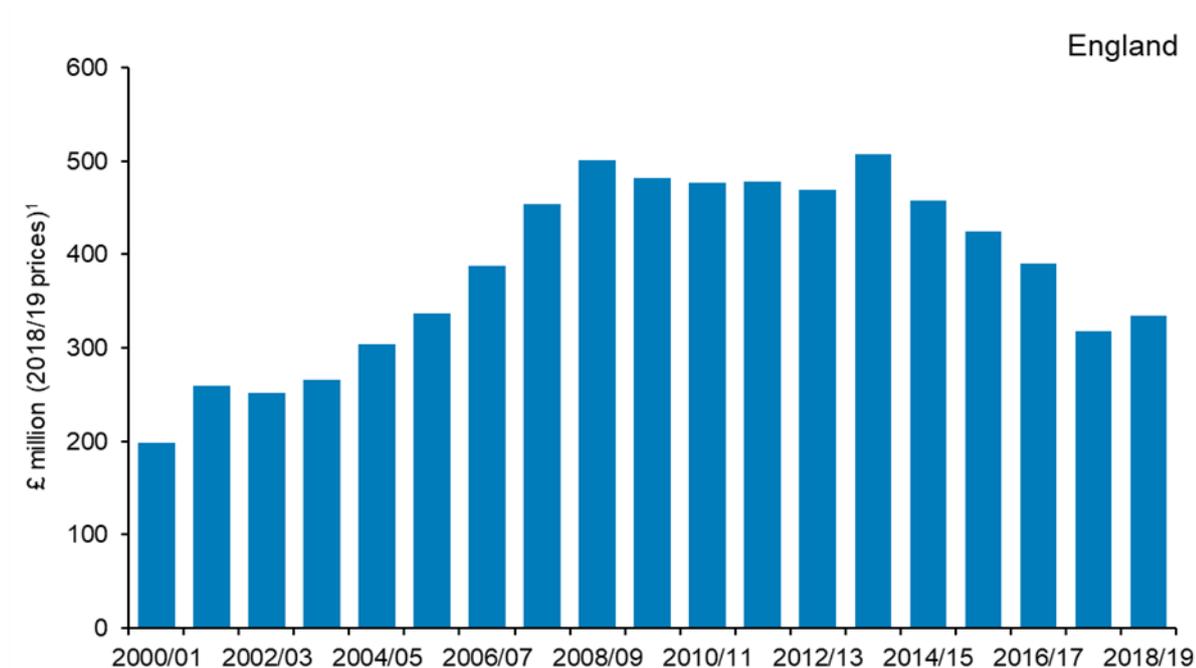
The second part of the indicator shows the level of real-term, spending on biodiversity in the UK by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a focus on biodiversity and/or nature conservation. It is not possible to disaggregate NGO spending to country level at this time.

## Public sector expenditure

In 2018/19, £335 million of public sector funding was spent on biodiversity in England; a real-term increase of 69% compared to the £198 million (in 2018/19 prices) spent in 2000/01 (Figure 15.1).

Real-term, public sector expenditure on biodiversity increased considerably from 2000/01 to a peak of £501 million in 2008/09. It then decreased a little over the next 4 years, before peaking again in 2013/14 at an all-time high of £507 million. The indicator then displayed annual decreases over the next 4 years before increasing by 5% to its current level of £335 million in 2018/19.

**Figure 15.1: Public sector expenditure on biodiversity in England, 2000/01 to 2018/19**



### Notes:

1. Deflated using UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflator. Therefore, data presented here are not directly comparable to those in previous publications because a new deflator is used to prepare each annual update.
2. There may be minor inconsistencies in the reporting of biodiversity expenditure from one year to the next (see background section for further details).
3. Revisions to past data series as a result of improved methodology or access to additional data can mean the chart (and figures) are not directly comparable to those presented in previous publications.

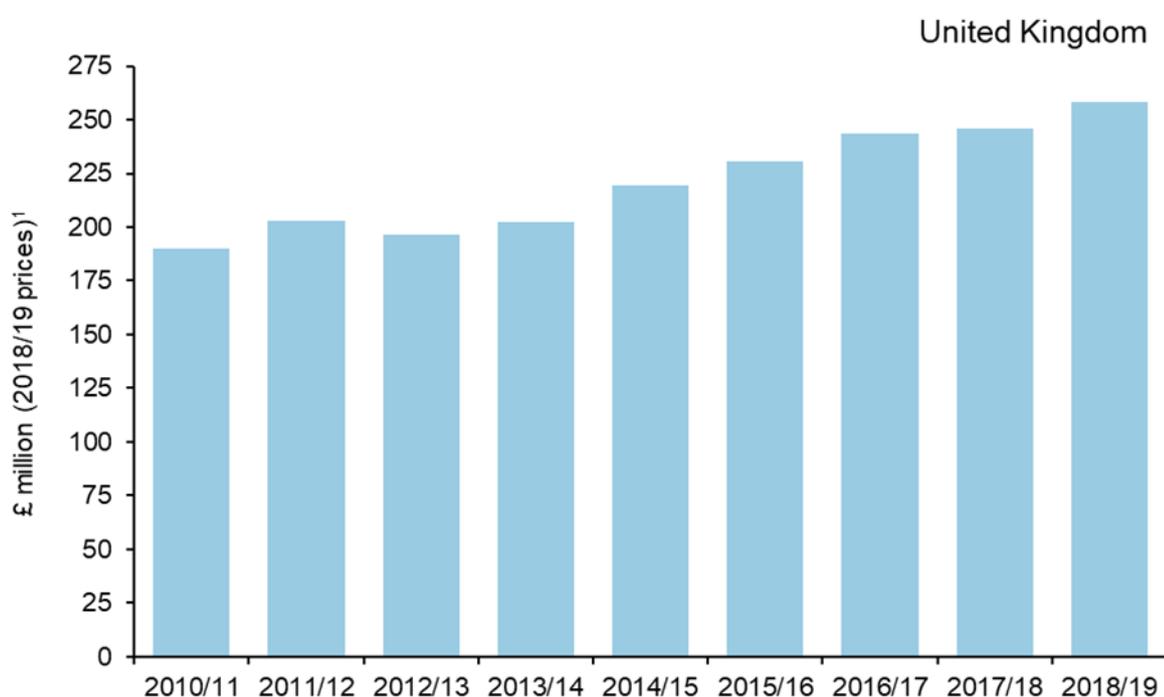
**Source:** Defra, HM Treasury.

Payments made to farmers and land managers under agri-environment schemes (Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship) increased in 2018/19. The expenditure on the new Countryside Stewardship schemes, which over time will replace the old Environmental Stewardship schemes, has increased year-on-year since the schemes commenced in 2016. These changes account for the vast majority of the 5% increase in the indicator value between 2017/18 and 2018/19.

### Non-governmental organisation expenditure

Spending on UK biodiversity by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a focus on biodiversity and/or nature conservation was £258 million in 2018/19, a real-term increase of £68 million (36%) since the time series began in 2010/11 and of £56 million (28%) in the last 5 years (Figure 15.2). There has also been a 5% real-term increase in NGO spend on UK biodiversity in the most recent year for which data are available (2018/19).

**Figure 15.2: Non-governmental organisation expenditure on biodiversity in the United Kingdom, 2010/11 to 2018/19**



#### Notes:

1. Deflated using UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflator. Therefore, data presented here are not directly comparable to those in previous publications because a new deflator is used to prepare each annual update.
2. Wherever possible, non-governmental organisation spend is net of government funding.
3. There may be minor inconsistencies in the reporting of biodiversity expenditure from one year to the next (see background section for further details).
4. Revisions to past data series as a result of improved methodology or access to additional data can mean the chart (and figures) are not directly comparable to those presented in previous publications.

**Source:** Defra, HM Treasury.

## Indicator assessment

### Assessment of change in expenditure on biodiversity

**Public sector expenditure on biodiversity in England: Long term (2000/01 to 2018/19): Improving; Short term (2013/14 to 2018/19): Deteriorating; Latest year (2018/19): Increased.**

**Non-governmental organisation spending on biodiversity in the UK: Long term (2000/01 to 2018/19): Insufficient data; Short term (2013/14 to 2018/19): Improving; Latest year (2018/19): Increased.**

**Note:** The long-term and short-term assessment of these measures is based on a 3% rule of thumb. The base years for these assessments use a 3-year average, see [Assessing Indicators](#).

## Relevance

Spending is just one way of assessing the government's commitment to biodiversity. Funding for conservation work is critical to the delivery of England's biodiversity strategies. The indicator shows progress with commitments to improve the status of our wildlife and habitats. It is relevant across a range of outcomes in [Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services](#) as it underpins the actions needed to achieve those outcomes. The indicator is also relevant to international goals and targets (see Annex B of the aforementioned publication).

## Background

The public sector expenditure indicator is based on a combination of expert opinion together with published and unpublished data from organisations across England. The data are collated by Defra statisticians to provide estimates of public sector spend on biodiversity in England between 2000/01 and 2018/19.

In 2014, Defra developed a measure of spend on UK biodiversity by NGOs with a focus on biodiversity and/or nature conservation. Although the measure does not include all the NGOs working in this field, it does compile data on biodiversity spending from 41 different organisations. These include 13 of the 47 Wildlife Trusts with the largest annual turnover, together with other well-known organisations such as RSPB, the Woodland Trust and WWF-UK. The data are used to provide estimates of spending on biodiversity in the UK between 2010/11 and 2018/19; wherever possible these figures are net of any government-funded spend. NGO support for, and action on biodiversity, some of which is funded by businesses and private individuals, is an important contribution to achieving biodiversity targets. Therefore, capturing the contribution of NGOs is a key element of tracking the UK's conservation efforts and including this source of expenditure gives a more complete picture of biodiversity expenditure in the UK. It is not currently possible to disaggregate this measure to country level or to reliably report NGO spending on international biodiversity.

The public sector and NGO indicators include direct expenditure on nature reserves and conservation measures together with spending on relevant research and development; they generally exclude expenditure on administration and training. Where possible, indirect expenditure (e.g. transfers to other organisations) has also been excluded from the indicator in order to avoid any double counting of financial flows. Judgment has been employed to finalise some components of the totals and the figures should be taken as approximate.

Restructuring of government departments, changes to funding streams and/or projects and the outsourcing of work relating to biodiversity (e.g. research and development) mean that there may be some inconsistencies in the reporting of biodiversity expenditure from one year to the next. The limited coverage of the NGO indicator together with the complexities involved in both defining and identifying expenditure on biodiversity also mean that the public sector and NGO figures are likely to be an underestimation; they do however provide a clear trend of biodiversity expenditure since the beginning of 2000/01 (public sector) and 2010/11 (NGOs). It is hoped that further development work will lead to improvements in the overall accuracy of future publications.

A full list of public sector and non-governmental organisations included in this indicator together with further details of the methodology used to produce the totals are available in the [technical background document](#).

The GDP deflator is a measure of general inflation in the domestic economy – it captures the price changes over a period of time. The deflator is expressed in terms of an index number. It is used here to convert historic prices into constant, 2018/19 prices, thereby allowing meaningful comparisons to be made between biodiversity expenditure in different years. It does however mean that data presented here are not directly comparable to those in previous publications because a new deflator is used to prepare each annual update.

### **Web links for further information**

Defra: [Technical background document: Funding for biodiversity in England](#)

**Last updated:** October 2020

**Latest data available:** Financial year 2018/19