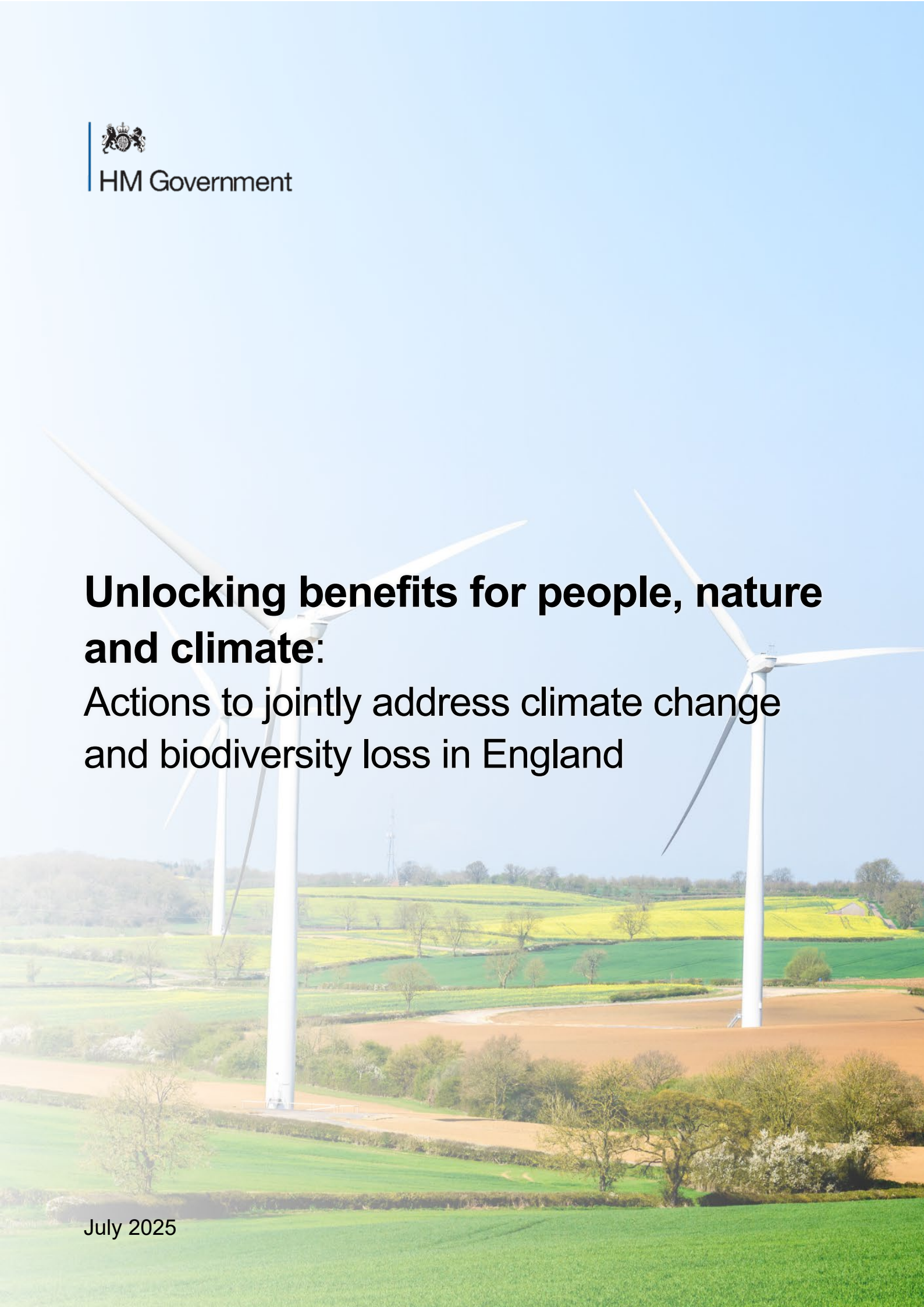
HM Government

# **Unlocking benefits for people, nature and climate**:

## Actions to jointly address climate change and biodiversity loss in England



July 2025

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# Foreword

*Minister Mary Creagh MP*

*Minister Kerry McCarthy MP*

Climate change and biodiversity loss are among the greatest challenges of our time. They are deeply interconnected, and so too must be our response. The United Kingdom, alongside UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, is committed to delivering ambitious, coherent action that addresses these challenges – because it's the right choice for today and for future generations.

The UK remains steadfast in its commitment to the three 'Rio' Conventions that aim to protect the global environment, and to the landmark Paris Agreement and Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). And by choosing to implement these instruments in an integrated way, we are committing not just to cut emissions and restore nature, but to make our country better off and healthier, through enhanced energy security, lower bills, cleaner air and water, greater food security, and economic growth.

Since coming to office, we have made rapid progress. We have delivered the most successful renewables auction in history, set a world-leading target to reduce emissions by 81% by 2035 and lifted the de-facto onshore wind ban. We have overseen the re-introduction of beavers, announced the creation of a new national forest stretching from the Cotswolds to the Mendips and launched the most ambitious changes to household waste collection in a generation. We have leveraged our domestic progress to help restore international leadership on climate and nature.

This report sets out the steps we are taking and potential avenues that we are exploring to further enhance our integrated approaches. The upcoming Land Use Framework for England, for example, will sit alongside the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan to help ensure our land is used as effectively as possible, for people, climate and nature. The case for these actions is clear. By maximising co-benefits we will strengthen our resilience, including our long-term fiscal sustainability, reducing the systemic risks associated with climate change and nature loss. Joined-up policies will reduce bills and improve food and water security, and make green space available to everyone, contributing to a fairer and more inclusive economy. Our actions will boost jobs and growth in some of the fastest growing sectors of the economy, including wind and nuclear. It will also boost nature-related businesses across the UK, which already in 2024 generated an estimated collective revenue of

£2.2bn.[1] Our vision is that by 2035, the UK will be a global leader in clean energy industries, and to have at least doubled investment in frontier clean energy industries to over £30 billion per year, creating hundreds of thousands of good jobs at good wages across the country.[2]

As we look ahead to key international milestones including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) 30 in Belém, IPBES, which the UK is hosting in Manchester in February 2026 and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP17 in 2026, we reaffirm our commitment to working with partners around the world to scale up integrated solutions that deliver for climate and nature and people; including demonstrating how our plans at home are working to make people in the UK safer, healthier and more prosperous.

**Minister Mary Creagh MP**

Minister for Nature for Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

**Minister Kerry McCarthy MP,**

Minister for Climate for Department of Energy Security and Net Zero

[1] The Growing Role of Nature-Related Business in the UK Economy
[2] The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025

# Introduction

The twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are among the most urgent challenges facing our planet today, with profound consequences for human prosperity and wellbeing. These crises are deeply interconnected. Climate change accelerates biodiversity loss, while the loss and degradation of nature releases greenhouse gases and simultaneously undermines our ability to adapt to a changing climate. There is no route to tackling climate change that does not involve nature, and no pathway to nature recovery that does not take into account climate change.

Our objective is that by 2035, the UK will be a global leader in clean energy industries, creating hundreds of thousands of good jobs at good wages across the country, supported by strong trade union recognition. The global green transition is projected by Arup and Oxford Economics to add $10.3 trillion to global GDP by 2050 and Net Zero sectors are already growing three times faster than the wider UK economy.[3]

In 2025, the UK reaffirmed its global leadership on nature and climate change by publishing our ambitious 2035 Nationally Determined Commitment (NDC)[4] and our latest National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).[5] These outline the UK's commitments to reducing emissions and halting and reversing biodiversity loss domestically, as required by the Paris Agreement and the CBD respectively. In 2023 the government also published the third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3)[6], setting out our plans to adapt to climate risks facing the UK. Embedded in these documents are policy approaches that reflect the UK's commitment to systemic, nature-positive solutions that address multiple environmental and societal goals. Taking coherent action of this kind is a challenge but also an opportunity.[7] There are compelling reasons to act now.

**We must adapt to a changing climate.** Extreme weather is already affecting lives across the UK. From record-breaking heatwaves and flash floods to coastal erosion and droughts, climate change is making our weather more unpredictable and dangerous. Degraded ecosystems expose societies to increased risks, including reduced resilience to adapt and respond to this extreme weather. This is why we must scale up our use of nature-based solutions to improve resilience and reduce the impacts and costs of rising global temperatures.

**A stable climate and healthy nature are our life support system**. From cold-water coral reefs, to woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, rivers, lakes, coastal and marine ecosystems, the UK houses a diverse range of ecosystems. Ensuring the health of these ecosystems is critical for the provision of clean air and water, to reduce flood risks, and support the food we eat. For

[3] Green transition creates $10.3T opportunity for the global economy by 2050

[4] UK's 2035 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) emissions reduction target under the Paris Agreement

[5] UK's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2030 (NBSAP)

[6] Third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3)

[7] Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service (IPBES) Nexus Assessment (2024)

example, over 75% of global food crop types depend on pollination by insects, birds or bats.[8] Protecting and restoring ecosystems that capture and store carbon could also reduce global emissions by up to 11.7 billion tonnes of $CO_2e$ a year (the equivalent to all emissions from global transport, if implemented alongside rapid and sustained decarbonisation).[9] Action to protect nature is among the most cost-effective climate mitigation solutions we have globally.

**Taking action improves lives now and protects our future.** Cleaner air, greener spaces, warmer homes, and better transport all come from investing in a greener economy. These changes are already creating thousands of good, well-paid, future-proof jobs in fast-growing sectors across the UK, in renewable energy, sustainable farming, and nature restoration. In the UK, the green, net zero economy is growing three times faster than the overall economy.[10] Nature's cultural services generate income and jobs through nature tourism and recreation, which is worth over £20 billion in 2019 in the UK.[11] Investing in climate and nature together is good business.

**Acting now is both the right thing to do and the smart financial choice.** Extreme weather is damaging homes, businesses, and public services across the UK. Delaying action only increases these costs, and protecting and restoring nature offers some of the best adaptation solutions available according to the UK's own experts, including the Climate Change Committee (CCC).[12] Failing to act could reduce UK GDP by up to 12% by 2030 and significantly increase national debt.[13] Whereas early investment in climate adaptation can reduce future costs, with every £1 spent, delivering up to £10 in economic benefits.[14] By acting now, we not only protect our economy and public finances, we also safeguard the natural world and way of life we want to pass on to future generations.

This report presents examples of how the UK Government is implementing joined-up solutions to meet its global commitments on climate change and biodiversity loss across England. Similar approaches are also implemented across Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as in many of the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, although these are not detailed within this report. Biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories is globally significant and we will shortly be publishing a new UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy.

By sharing the examples in this report, the UK aims to contribute to the global effort to tackle climate change and nature loss whilst delivering tangible benefits to the people of the United Kingdom. The time for integrated action is now.

[8] Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service (IPBES), Pollinators Assessment (2016)
[9] Nature-based Solutions for Climate Change Mitigation (2021)
[10] The Future is Green Report (2025)
[11] The Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation in the UK: Observatory for Sport in Scotland (2017)
[12] The Seventh Carbon Budget
[13] Assessing the Materiality of Nature-Related Financial Risks for the UK
[14] The Costs of Adaptation, and the Economic Costs and Benefits of Adaptation in the UK (2022)

# Section 1: Our framework for action

## 1.1 International treaties and commitments

From the Paris Agreement to the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the UK has committed to taking wide ranging actions to support global efforts to combat climate change and halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, we have a world-leading 1.5C aligned NDC, and the UK actively contributes to the global effort to limit the rise in average global temperatures to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C. Under the Paris Agreement, the UK is also committed to the Global Goal on Adaptation, which seeks to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change, and has adopted the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, which prioritises adaptation as a global imperative and sets out a shared vision for protecting people, livelihoods, and ecosystems through national adaptation planning and improved risk assessments.

Under the GBF the UK has committed to take domestic and international action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. This effort is supported through action to implement the 23 global targets of the GBF which are to be achieved by 2030. Key commitments under the GBF include protecting at least 30% of land and ocean areas by 2030 (“30 by 30” target), through the expansion and effective management of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and enhancing sustainability in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry to ensure these sectors contribute positively to biodiversity.

The UK is also a signatory to numerous declarations and initiatives, including the COP28 Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People, which commits us to enhance synergistic action to bridge the climate, biodiversity and land-restoration agendas.

## 1.2 The UK’s scientific advisers

Policy to address these global environmental crises, both domestically and internationally, is informed by robust evidence and supported by advice provided by domestic bodies including the UK’s Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

### 1.2.1 Climate Change Committee (CCC)

The CCC is the UK’s independent statutory body, established under the Climate Change Act 2008 to advise the UK and devolved governments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, including emissions reduction targets, and to report to Parliament on progress. The CCC's recent progress reports emphasised the importance of accelerating nature-based solutions and integrating climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

In 2025, the CCC provided advice on the UK's seventh Carbon Budget, which the government will set by June 2026, in line with our statutory duties. This will set out the next phase of our pathway to net zero to continue to secure the economic, societal and environmental benefits of the net zero transition.

### 1.2.2 Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)

The JNCC is the UK's statutory adviser on nature conservation. JNCC works across land and sea with the UK and devolved governments on UK-wide and international nature conservation, and with the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. JNCC provides robust scientific evidence and advice to decision-makers to support biodiversity conservation and ecosystem recovery.

JNCC's 2023-2030 strategy, *Together for Nature*, focuses on turning science into action for nature, people and the planet. A key priority is to align action for nature and climate change to deliver outcomes that both tackle climate breakdown and accelerate nature recovery. Over the past year JNCC has co-ordinated production of the UK's NBSAP.

Recognising that climate change and biodiversity loss are among the greatest challenges of our time the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Climate Change Committee (CCC) are committing to a data sharing agreement to help tackle these intertwined crises. This partnership will bring to bear a wealth of expertise in an integrated way, helping government shape the right solutions for both climate and nature.

### 1.2.3 On the global stage

The government and research community play a leading role in delivering scientific evidence and shaping the global response to the climate and nature crises. The UK is a major contributor to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), providing cutting-edge research, data and modelling that inform the global assessments across climate and nature. The IPCC and IPBES collaborate with international partners including CBD, UNEA and UNFCCC to share expertise and shape informed and integrated policy responses to biodiversity loss, climate risks and environmental resilience. The UK will host the 12$^{th}$ session of the Plenary of IPBES in February 2026 to showcase UK initiatives in business innovation, science and nature.

In partnership with UK institutions including the Met Office, the UK also invests in international research programmes such as Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CLARE), Weather and Climate Science for Service Partnership Programme (WCSSP) and Weather and Climate Information Services (WISER), which harness world-class science and innovation to tackle climate risks and deliver practical solutions. The UK National Climate Science Partnership and Met Office Hadley Centre Climate Programme further strengthen this effort by delivering world-leading, cutting-edge climate modelling and policy-relevant research, contributing to IPCC assessments, supporting UK resilience and contributing to international climate and nature research. These efforts ensure that UK science remains at the forefront of global efforts to tackle the twin crises of climate change and nature degradation.

## 1.3 The UK's implementation plans

### 1.3.1 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)

Under the Paris Agreement, each Party must submit its NDC to the UNFCCC every 5 years. The UK's 2035 NDC target, announced by the Prime Minister at COP29 in November 2024, is to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions by at least 81% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels, excluding international aviation and shipping emissions.[15] This Autumn, the government will deliver an updated cross-economy plan, outlining the policies and proposals needed to deliver carbon budgets 4-6 and the 2030 and 2035 NDCs on the pathway to net zero by 2050. We will ensure this plan addresses the interaction between climate and nature policies, including how nature-based solutions contribute to delivering carbon budgets.

### 1.3.2 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)

In February 2025, the UK published its Blueprint for Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss: the UK's NBSAP, which draws on the commitments made by the UK, the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to summarise our collective ambition to address biodiversity loss and to achieve all 23 of the GBF targets at home.[16] Devolution allows the four countries of the UK to tailor GBF implementation to their unique circumstances, and each has set out biodiversity and wider environmental plans and actions. For England, contributions to delivering the NBSAP are set out in Environmental Improvement Plans (EIPs). A new EIP will be published in due course, which will ensure we are identifying and championing actions that deliver cross-cutting benefits for nature and climate, at sea and on land.

### 1.3.3 National Adaptation Programme (NAP)

The NAP sets the actions that the UK Government and others will take to adapt to the impacts of climate change in the UK. The NAP3 sets out the key adaptation actions for 2023 to 2028. This report forms part of the 5-yearly cycle of requirements laid down in the Climate Change Act 2008. Under the Act, national governments in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland are responsible for producing respective National Adaptation Plans.

### 1.3.4 International support

The government is also committed to supporting international partners to develop and implement high ambition NDCs, NBSAPs and NAPs. This includes the support delivered through the NDC Partnership, a coalition of more than 130 countries and 100 institutions working with ministries of environment, planning and finance in 100 developing countries. The Partnership has been instrumental in supporting countries to increase the quality and ambition of their NDCs, including support for countries to set out nature-based solutions within NDCs 3.0, aligned with NBSAPs. The UK is a founding member and Ocean Champion of the High

[15] The UK's NDC includes all four nations of the UK, and the UKOTs and CDs that have had the UK's ratification of the Paris Agreement extended to them.

[16] The UK's NBSAP includes all four nations of the UK, and those CDs and OTs who have had the UK's ratification of the CBD extended to them.

Ambition Coalition for nature and people (HAC) which is supporting more than 120 countries to implement the '30 by 30' target of the GBF.[17]

## 1.4 The UK's legal framework for climate and nature action

The UK's approach to environmental and climate protection is underpinned by two key pieces of legislation: the **Environment Act 2021** and the **Climate Change Act 2008**. Together, they provide a comprehensive legal framework for tackling climate change, enhancing biodiversity, and embedding environmental considerations into policy and decision-making.

### 1.4.1 Environment Act 2021

Under the Environment Act 2021, the UK Government has set 13 legally binding environmental targets across areas such as biodiversity, air and water quality, waste, and woodland cover. The Act requires the publication of regularly updated Environmental Improvement Plans (EIPs) and mandates that ministers have due regard to the Environmental Principles Policy Statement, which guides policy development using five internationally recognised environmental principles, including integration and the polluter pays principle.[18]

The Act introduced Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which identify local priorities and actions to support nature recovery across England. The Act also places a biodiversity duty on all public authorities in England, requiring them to consider and act to conserve and enhance biodiversity, as well as introducing mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG). Many of the targets and duties set under the Act, and the actions taking place to deliver them, provide direct benefits for climate mitigation and adaptation.

### 1.4.2 Climate Change Act 2008

The Climate Change Act 2008 sets a legally binding target for the UK to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, set on a whole economy basis. It requires the government to set five-year carbon budgets, with the Seventh Carbon Budget (2038–2042) due in 2026.

The Act also requires that climate change adaptation policies and proposals contribute to sustainable development. This is reflected in planning regulations. The Act also mandates a UK-wide Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) every five years, followed by a National Adaptation Programme (NAP) to address identified risks.

Similar legal frameworks guide action in many of the devolved governments.

[17] High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People
[18] Environmental principles policy statement

# Section 2: Planning for an integrated approach

The previous section sets out the framework within which the government makes policy decisions about climate change and nature. To support the effective implementation of this framework, England has also put in place planning tools to support better decision-making.

## 2.1 Natural capital

Underpinning all these tools is the natural capital approach, which helps to frame nature as a valuable asset delivering essential services, such as carbon sequestration, flood protection, and urban cooling. The UK is a leader in natural capital accounting. Our natural assets provide a substantial source of our national wealth, estimated at £1.634 trillion in 2022, delivering annual benefits of £47.6 billion each year.[19] Our natural capital accounts also show the value of nature for climate. For example, in 2022 UK woodlands removed 18 million tonnes of $CO_2e$ valued at £5.1 billion, and nature in urban areas reduced the costs of urban heatwaves by £820 million.

## 2.2 Planning policy

The government's vision is for a planning system that delivers for both nature and people. As set out in the Plan for Change, the government will reform the planning system so that it is pro-growth and pro-infrastructure. These reforms are critical to meet ambitious targets to build 1.5 million homes and advance 150 major infrastructure projects. Meeting these objectives need not come at the cost of the environment and can in fact help improve the state of nature across the country.

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) requires development to make a measurably positive contribution to biodiversity compared to what was there before. The government is committed to continuing to evolve and improve BNG to ensure it works effectively for nature and for development, and to supporting the emerging private sector nature market. Defra is currently consulting on the implementation of BNG for nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) and on improving the implementation of BNG for minor, medium and brownfield development, which looks at options that will make it easier, quicker and cheaper for small developers to deliver gains for nature.[20]

In addition, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill includes the creation of a Nature Restoration Fund which will ensure development contributes to the recovery of protected sites and species. By unlocking the positive impact development can have in improving our environment, the NRF

[19] ONS UK natural capital accounts 2024

[20] Improving the implementation of biodiversity net gain for minor, medium and brownfield development

will support the delivery of the government's wider climate and nature commitments, whilst ensuring that our planning system is clear, timely and cost effective for developers.

### 2.2.1 A new Land-Use Strategy

Over the next 25 years, England's landscapes will need to change to support climate change mitigation and adaptation and to ensure the recovery of nature, whilst driving economic growth and producing healthy and affordable food. To guide this change, the government has developed the evidence and analysis needed to inform land use decisions, including land use change.

The upcoming Land Use Framework for England, planned for later in 2025, is expected to sit alongside the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (due to be published in 2026) and other sectoral spatial plans, to guide UK land to be used as effectively as possible, for people, climate and nature. The Framework will support spatial plans for energy and housing, including the delivery of 1.5 million new homes and the energy infrastructure needed to achieve clean power by 2030. The Land Use Framework will also address the challenges faced by communities, businesses, developers, landowners and farmers, as they adapt to a changing climate and to new societal demands, aligning incentives to encourage land management that delivers on multiple objectives, including for food security, nature and climate.

### 2.2.2 Spatial planning for energy

The government has empowered the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to identify cross-energy sector issues in energy planning by taking a whole system role, including planning for resilience across the energy system. The government recognises that to make the best use of our finite natural assets, integrated spatial planning is key.

In October 2024, the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments, jointly commissioned the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to develop a Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP): the first ever spatial energy plan for Great Britain, to support a more actively planned approach to energy infrastructure across both land and sea. The first SSEP is due to be published in 2026 (subject to consultation) and updated every three years. To produce the SSEP, NESO will conduct economic modelling to identify cost-effective locations for future GB electricity and hydrogen infrastructure within energy security, decarbonisation, and environmental constraints aimed at protecting and restoring nature, alongside fisheries, farming, transport and water supply. For each renewable energy type, decision-making will incorporate the best information to reduce impacts and maximise co-benefits for the natural environment.

### 2.2.3 Planning at sea

Spatial planning is as critical at sea as it is on land. There is huge potential to drive a recovery of our marine and coastal environment, to the benefit of fishing communities, tourism, clean energy and nature; if we adopt the right tools and policies to identify synergies and maximise benefits.

The UK has a comprehensive marine planning system to tackle this challenge, based on the foundations of the UK Marine Policy Statement. The Marine Spatial Prioritisation programme

has generated important insights into the range of spatial and policy demands on the English sea and how they interact, and how to maximise colocation between marine activities to meet our multiple policy goals. One way to do this is by helping to guide the Crown Estate to identify suitable areas for future offshore wind lease areas which avoid the most environmentally sensitive areas (including for birds) or areas which are important for other marine sectors and Government priorities. It will also help to reduce clashes between future offshore wind projects and other users of the sea, including fisheries.

The Offshore Wind Environmental Improvement Package is intended to de-risk and accelerate the consenting of offshore wind, while also protecting the marine environment.

The UK is also actively participating in the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI). This informal voluntary initiative was set up in 2023 with countries sharing the North Sea, including Ireland, to work together to address shared marine spatial challenges. The GNSBI is a helpful platform to share knowledge and best practice with neighbouring EU countries, for example on national nature restoration projects or colocation policies. It aims to complement OSPAR, the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic.

### 2.2.4 Delivering 30 by 30

The 30by30 commitment, to effectively conserve and manage 30% of our land and seas by 2030, sits at the very heart of the UK's aim to ensure nature's recovery. Delivering this target means ensuring that the most important and wildlife-rich habitats are benefiting from effective, long-term conservation and management.

At CBD COP16 in October 2024, the UK confirmed its vision for delivering 30by30 in England and published the criteria for land and inland water areas which can count towards this target. At least 7.1% of England's land has been identified that already meets the 30by30 criteria and counts towards the target. This includes Sites of Special Scientific Interest in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition, plus areas of the Public Forest Estate managed for biodiversity.

While it is expected that there is additional land already meeting the criteria, such as NGO reserves, this illustrates the scale of action needed to achieve this target. An action plan for 30by30 on land is being developed, to ensure this commitment can be achieved. The aim is to finalise and publish this action plan later in 2025.

# Section 3: Delivering the clean energy superpower mission

This government believes answers to the challenges we face around energy security, affordability and sustainability all point in the same direction, toward clean energy. Investing in clean energy at speed and scale can help ensure energy security, protect billpayers, create good jobs and tackle the climate crisis. That is why making Britain a clean energy superpower is one of the Prime Minister's five defining missions of this Government. To deliver clean power by 2030, the government is committed to accelerating the deployment of renewables, including offshore wind, onshore wind, and solar.

New energy infrastructure development can have impacts on the environment and wildlife, but the government is committed to ensuring that nature recovery is central to development, and at the heart of the clean energy mission. The rapid deployment of new low carbon energy capacity will mean that some communities will see an increase in energy infrastructure being built in their area, which is why the government is working to ensure communities feel tangible and enduring benefits as we speed up the building of clean power infrastructure. The government is therefore seeking views on introducing a mandatory community benefit fund scheme for low carbon energy infrastructure, and on facilitating shared ownership of renewable generation infrastructure.

## 3.1 Solar power

Solar power is a cheap, reliable, source of clean electricity, and is readily deployable in the UK. Solar regularly produces 20-30% of UK electricity during the day. The government's ambition is to triple capacity to 45-47GW by 2030, creating tens of thousands of jobs across the country.

Smaller solar projects[21] must demonstrate a net biodiversity gain of 10% compared to the site's previous use. When correctly implemented, solar sites cause minimal ground disturbance, and the newly fallow land can be used for plant growth, wildlife enhancements, and/or livestock grazing. They can also incorporate the use of nature-based flood and water management features. Research has found increases in the number of pollinators and bird species on solar farms, which can also benefit neighbouring land.[22] [23]

Large-scale solar projects are required to complete Environmental Impact Assessments as part of their applications for planning permission. These set out any adverse effects on the

[21] Here, 'smaller' means not a 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project' (NSIP). Projects larger than 50MW are currently deemed to be Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). From 31st December 2025, this threshold will be increased to 100MW.

[22] The Effects of Solar. Farms on Local Biodiversity; A Comparative Study

[23] Solar farms managed for nature can boost bird numbers and biodiversity

local environment. We are exploring avenues for the biodiversity net gain requirements currently applied to smaller-scale solar farms to be extended to large projects in due course.

Ultimately, project developers recognise that well-managed and well-situated projects are able to navigate the planning system more smoothly. This has created an incentive for developers to choose sites sensitively, to time their construction to avoid impacts on wildlife, and to invest in intelligent management plans.

## 3.2 Onshore wind

The cost of onshore wind has fallen significantly over the last ten years, and it is now one of the cheapest ways to generate electricity in the UK. There are also domestic economic benefits to deploying onshore wind: UK produced content in domestic wind farms is estimated to be between 60-70%, with high shares of jobs and investment in development, operation and maintenance, civil engineering and electrical works.[24] On 4th July, the government published updated community benefits guidance for onshore wind in England setting out best practice approaches to ensure developments have a lasting positive impact on communities.[25]

The government's Clean Power 2030 Action Plan has committed to 27-29GW of onshore wind by 2030, from around 15GW today. [26] The government has removed the de facto ban on onshore wind in England and laid legislation to reintroduce onshore wind into the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) Regime at a threshold of 100MW – placing it on the same footing as nuclear power stations and offshore wind.

Onshore wind turbines can have local environmental impacts, both temporarily during construction (such as with noise disruption, soil displacement or air quality) or during operation. Government controls for this through planning and consenting processes, including surveying and impact assessments. There are very few examples in the UK of poorly sited wind farms

[24] BVGA, Economic Benefits from Onshore Wind

[25] Guidance: Community benefits guidance for onshore wind in England: resource kit

[26] Clean Power 2030 Action Plan

causing degradation to local environment and nature, and multiple wind sites that have committed to creating and enhancing habitats.

## 3.3 Offshore wind

The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan sets out the need to deliver a significant expansion in offshore wind capacity of between 43-50 GW by 2030. Work is being undertaken to prioritise areas for further offshore wind development. Although projects cannot always avoid all impacts on protected species and habitats, there is a need to ensure that any compensation requirements are viable and deliver genuine benefits for marine and coastal wildlife at scale. The government is therefore implementing the Offshore Wind Environmental Improvement Package (OWEIP), which will help accelerate offshore wind delivery whilst improving action to protect and restore the marine environment. The government has been working closely with the devolved governments since Spring 2022 to develop the OWEIP, which will increase the options available to compensate for unavoidable impacts to Marine Protected Areas, and introduce one or more Marine Recovery Funds to deliver these measures strategically, support investments in wildlife, develop best practice environmental standards for design and improve monitoring. Taken together, this package should reduce costs and speed up deployment of offshore wind whilst driving recovery of the marine environment.

The government is committed to using our expertise to support deploying renewables in a nature-positive way internationally. The UK has championed holistic action under different international conventions – for example, joining the Convention on Migratory Species 'Energy Task Force', and supporting the 'Energy Transition for Synergistic Climate-Nature Policy and Implementation' under the UNFCCC. Through UK International Climate Finance (ICF), the UK has improved access to clean energy for 82,132,000 people and 1,111 institutions,[27] while pursuing an overall ICF portfolio that is nature positive. Our membership of multilateral initiatives also supports accelerating the global energy transition, including through the Global Clean Power Alliance (GCPA), the Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA), the Clean Energy Transition Partnership (CETP), and implementing the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs).

[27] UK International Climate Finance results 2024

# Section 4: A nature-rich, thriving rural economy

## 4.1 Supporting farmers and reducing emissions from agriculture

Restoring habitats such as woodlands, peatlands and salt marshes reduces society's vulnerability to floods and droughts, stores carbon, helps clean up water pollution and contributes to the health and wellbeing of millions of people. Adopting more nature-friendly farming practices also helps increase the resilience of our food system, boosting soil fertility, reducing the costs of farm inputs, and supporting the recovery of pollinator populations.

Farmers and land managers are stewards of the land, who hold many of these vital solutions to nature's recovery in their hands. This is why, in June 2025, the Chancellor announced the largest investment in nature in our history, with over £7 billion committed to nature's recovery.

In England, three Environmental Land Management schemes currently pay farmers to deliver environmental benefits alongside food production. To support the transition to more sustainable land management, the government will invest over £2.7 billion per year from 2026–27 to 2028–29 in sustainable farming and nature recovery. This includes an average of £2.3 billion through the Farming and Countryside Programme and up to £400 million through additional nature schemes. Funding for Environmental Land Management schemes will rise from £800 million in 2023–24 to £2 billion by 2028–29, underpinned by the phased withdrawal of legacy subsidies. This investment will help boost productivity, protect the ecosystems that underpin food production, and contribute to meeting Environment Act targets on air and water quality, biodiversity, and habitat restoration as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The farming roadmap 'Farming 2050: Growing England's Future' will involve government working with farmers and farming and environmental organisation representatives to set the course of farming over the next 25 years. It will provide a vision for our farming sector and set the direction for how we get there, with a focus on delivering our food security and environmental objectives and supporting farms to be resilient and profitable. This will also be supported by the Land Use Framework.

The UK's forthcoming Carbon Budget Growth Delivery Plan (CBGDP) will set out the Government's approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, including methane. It will set out methane-related policies that will help deliver towards the government's carbon budgets including work to introduce Methane Suppressing Feed Products (MSFPs) and efforts to improve feed efficiency and animal health.

Water is essential for farmers to be able to grow and process high quality food. Increased water demands from all sectors, fuelled by droughts and climate change, threaten the ability to produce high quality and reliable supplies of food. We are encouraging farmers to work

together to understand and plan for their future water needs, through funding Local Resource Options screening studies to identify the best local solutions.

The Government is also taking action on methane in the waste sector. Indeed, seeking to eliminate as far as possible the landfilling of biodegradable municipal waste is key to meet our net zero objectives and support the development of a Circular Economy. The government's Collection and Packaging reforms will help achieve this ambition, in combination with exploring the feasibility of any additional measures as set out in the response to a call for evidence published in February 2025. More detail will follow in the CBGDP which is being published in Autumn.

## 4.2 Managing flood risk

Climate change is altering rainfall patterns, increasing the risk of both floods and droughts, and placing growing pressure on the UK's water environment. At the same time, pollution from agriculture, industry and urban areas continues to degrade the quality of our rivers, lakes and coastal waters. These pressures threaten wildlife, human health and the long-term resilience of our water supplies. Restoring natural systems—such as wetlands, floodplains and river corridors—can help to slow the flow of water, filter out pollutants, and support biodiversity. By working with nature, we can improve water quality and availability, reduce the impacts of climate change, and create healthier, more resilient places for people and wildlife.

Natural flood management (NFM) is a key part of our approach to mitigating flood risk, providing wider benefits for environment and society such as carbon reduction, environmental enhancement, improving water quality and water resources. The floods investment programme delivers a range of schemes, including NFM, alongside wider government investment such as the Environmental Land Management Schemes. We are reforming our approach to investing in flood defence, which will make it easier to invest in schemes that also boost nature, water resources and fight climate change.

Nature-based solutions can also be used to manage and improve water availability. We are trialling them in the Cam area, testing Runoff Attenuation Features to improve water availability, river flow support and groundwater recharge.

## 4.3 Tree planting and woodland management

As well as providing habitats for wildlife, woodlands capture and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Tree planting also has a key role to play in urban expansion and public health, providing attractive and resilient places to live, with cleaner air and mitigation of urban heat island effects.

A legally binding target was enshrined in the Environment Act (2021), to increase tree canopy and woodland cover to 16.5% of land area in England by 2050; and in 2025 the government committed £816 million for tree planting over the Spending Review period, alongside our commitment to establish three new national forests in England. The Net Present Social Value of delivering the 16.5% target is estimated at £13.4bn by 2100.[28]

While there can be potential tensions between new woodland planting and protecting existing open ground habitats and species, the government aims to minimise these through the Environmental Impact Assessment and the requirement for all woodland creation projects to comply with the UK Forestry Standard; avoiding planting on priority habitat, protecting priority species, and ensuring new woodland contributes to climate adaptation goals.

Alongside domestic restoration, the UK has led global efforts to halt and reverse deforestation. The UK has endorsed the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use, and the COP28 Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement, both of which commit to halting deforestation by 2030. Through International Climate Finance programming, partnerships, and diplomacy, we are working together with forest country partners to strengthen governance and tackle illegality, mobilise finance for forests from all sources, and accelerate the shift to more sustainable trade and markets to enable transition to a forest-positive economy. At COP29, the UK announced that we would be working with Guyana to co-chair the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership, a coalition of countries working together to drive ambition on delivering the 2030 forest goal. The government is also working closely with Brazil to support positive outcomes for forests at COP30.

[28] Environment Act Targets 2022 – Tree Canopy and Woodland cover target

## 4.4 Peatland restoration

Healthy peatlands are powerful carbon stores, sequestering atmospheric carbon and playing a vital role in water regulation, flood mitigation and as rich ecosystems that support some of our rarest species. While nearly a third of our deep peat is protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), only 13% of this area remains in a near natural state. Peatland restoration is thus essential to halting habitat and biodiversity loss, alongside achieving the UK's climate goals.

Peatland restoration also represents great value for money. The Office for National Statistics estimated that the cost of restoring all UK peatlands to near natural condition would deliver carbon benefits alone of £109 billion and would outweigh the restoration costs by at least 5 to 1.[29]

Because of this, the government plans to restore hundreds of thousands of hectares of peatland across England. The Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme is projected to bring approximately 30,000 hectares of peatlands under active restoration management by March 2026. Long-term support will be delivered through Environmental Land Management schemes, whilst attracting new private finance, including through the Peatland Code.

Preventing further damage to our peatlands is crucial. To support sustainable management of upland peat, we are reviewing the Heather and Grass Burning regulations, which were introduced to prevent unnecessary burning of peatlands. The review is considering the benefits of extending protection to a broader area, while maintaining an effective licensing scheme.

Internationally, the UK supports full implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (including peatlands) and is working closely with international partners to map and manage internationally significant peatlands. This includes our work with the Congo Basin countries through the Congo Basin Science Initiative, which has helped to map some of the largest tropical peatlands in the world.

[29] Office for National Statistics, UK Natural Capital: Peatlands

# Section 5: Restoring our seas

Marine ecosystems play a critical role in regulating the Earth's climate and supporting global biodiversity. They act as vast carbon sinks, absorbing approximately a quarter of anthropogenic $CO_2$ emissions[30], regulating temperatures, and supporting complex food webs.[31] However, they are under threat from the very crises they help mitigate. Ocean acidification and warming waters are altering species distributions and disrupting ecological balances, potentially changing our ocean forever. The UK's marine environment hosts a huge range of species and ecosystems, including cold-water coral reefs, seagrass meadows, and kelp forests. Conserving and restoring this marine biodiversity improves the health of marine ecosystems, improving their ability to sequester carbon, while supporting resilience and adaptation.

## 5.1 Marine protected areas

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are established to protect habitats and species essential for healthy, functioning marine ecosystems. By reducing pressures such as habitat loss, well-managed MPAs can enhance biodiversity and improve natural capital. These benefits extend beyond nature. Healthier seas can support sustainable fisheries, store more carbon, and help buffer coastal communities from the impacts of storms and sea level rise. To realise their full potential, MPAs should be designed, monitored and managed in collaboration with local communities, fishers and other marine users.

MPAs are at the heart of the UK's delivery of the 30 by 30 target at sea. There are 181 MPAs in English waters, covering 51% of inshore and 37% of offshore waters. In June 2025, the government announced a consultation on proposals to ban specific fishing activity where this is damaging protected habitats in a further 42 MPAs, including a proposal to restrict bottom trawling over 30,000 $km^2$ of England's waters. This is in addition to the 60% of MPAs that already have byelaws in place to protect habitats from damaging fishing activity, and to existing protections provided by the marine planning and licensing regimes. England has also designated three Highly Protected Marine Areas which aim to protect the full marine ecosystem within their boundaries. Two of these sites are also designated to protect blue carbon habitats.

## 5.2 Coastal wetlands

Coastal wetlands help tackle climate change and provide critical habitats for species. Saltmarshes, mudflats and seagrass beds act as natural coastal defences, absorbing wave energy and reducing the risk of flooding and erosion. These habitats support a wide range of

[30] Global Carbon Budget 2018

[31] Oceans at MIT

wildlife, including commercially important fish – such as cod and herring – and migratory birds – such as nightingales and cuckoos – while also improving water quality by trapping sediments and filtering pollutants. Coastal wetlands are also highly effective carbon sinks, storing carbon over long timescales. Protecting and restoring these ecosystems also enhances the natural beauty and recreational value of our coastlines.

Work is also underway with administrations across the UK through the UK Blue Carbon Evidence Partnership to fill the gaps that prevent saltmarsh from being included in the UK Greenhouse Gas Inventory. This will support better mitigation and adaption to climate change on our coasts and at sea. We are also continuing to support the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership whose rolling evidence updates are informing policy positions and will inform future iterations of the National Adaptation Programme.

# Section 6: Mobilising green finance

To deliver the integrated benefits outlined in this report, there is an urgent need to unlock finance to drive action. The government is already investing to help deliver goals for climate and nature, and in the Spending Review 2025 the government committed £63 billion in capital funding for clean energy, climate and nature. However, public money alone cannot achieve the scale and pace of change we need: this also requires sustained investments from the private sector. Accelerating to net zero will unlock a range of benefits for businesses, including new market opportunities, access to green finance and reduced energy bills.

To facilitate this, the government is supporting and incentivising investors and businesses to understand the risks they face from nature loss; to measure the value of the services they receive from nature; and to identify ways in which they can finance nature in order to support the resilience and profitability of their activities.

This work includes developing clear standards and robust governance arrangements to ensure the evolution of high integrity carbon and nature markets domestically and internationally. In support of this, domestically we consulted on what functions and form nature market oversight needs to take, through the current Voluntary Carbon and Nature Markets consultation[32] and are working with the British Standards Institution to develop a suite of UK nature investment standards. Internationally the UK is a strong supporter of developing country schemes that foster ambitious carbon market projects, like the Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance (LEAF) Coalition, and is working through international fora to set the foundations for a credible global carbon trading system rooted in environmental integrity. We have also launched, alongside Kenya and Singapore, the Coalition to Grow Carbon Markets, a first-of-a-kind government-led initiative to strengthen voluntary demand for carbon credits. This gives businesses the clarity needed to invest in high-integrity credits and drive real climate and nature impact, unlocking carbon markets as a trusted tool in accelerating towards net zero. The Coalition's work will help boost the flow of debt-free finance to emerging markets and developing economies to increase investment in activities that accelerate the pace of global emissions reductions, as well as restore nature, cut pollution and deliver lasting co-benefits for local ecosystems and communities.

In tandem, through initiatives such as the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) we are helping nature projects get ready for investment through capacity building. The first round of NEIRF has successfully supported 86 projects in England, with early results showing over £2.97 million in revenue already generated through the sale of environmental units at the end of the grant period - a figure expected to grow significantly as projects develop. Alongside supporting the development of a pipeline of investible projects, we will invest £30 million of risk capital into a new Big Nature Impact Fund, a blended finance fund led by Finance Earth to drive investment into nature projects in England.

[32] Voluntary carbon and nature markets: raising integrity

This work supports our ambition for the UK to be the world leader in sustainable finance. The City of London, through its deep capital markets and financial services expertise, plays a pivotal role in advancing the green transition in the UK and internationally. UK-based banks, insurers, asset managers, and advisory firms provide a wide range of services that support climate and nature aligned financial decision-making around the world.

On 25 June 2025, the government published a package of consultations setting out the next steps to deliver the foundations of a world-leading sustainable finance framework, including how to take forward climate-related transition plan requirements. Credible transition planning can support better allocation of capital and build confidence in the market, as well as enable businesses and investors to manage the risks and seize the opportunities presented by the transition to net-zero, and a more sustainable, nature positive and resilient economy. In parallel, the Government's consultation on the UK Sustainability Reporting Standards (UK SRS) explores the application of the International Sustainability Standard Board (ISSB) standards in the UK context. UK SRS, which includes consideration of climate and nature, aim to support long-term, sustainable decision-making by the business and investment community by providing high-quality and comparable information about the sustainability-related financial risks and opportunities that businesses face.

The government is also backing and funding the Taskforce on Nature Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), with over 590 global adopters across 65 of the 77 Sustainable Accounting Standards Board sectors as of June 2025.

We are also extending our work on nature markets internationally through our sponsorship of the International Advisory Panel on Biodiversity Credits (IAPB) with France. The IAPB has now spun out to become its own entity and will continue work to catalyse high integrity nature markets. Through the recently launched London Coalition on Sustainable Sovereign Debt, we are bringing together private sector stakeholders and government to find pragmatic solutions to more sustainable sovereign debt financing in developing economies that will enable meaningful progress towards their climate, nature and development goals.

# Conclusion

Climate and nature are two interlinked challenges, and as this report has demonstrated, integrated approaches that align environmental, economic, and social goals are essential for delivering resilient, long-term outcomes. However, the structures set up to manage these issues nationally and internationally arose independently of each other. Integration does not happen automatically, and integration can be incredibly complex. Designing integrated action requires navigating trade-offs with care, foresight, and transparency. These are not reasons to delay action but they are reminders that policy coherence must be actively planned for, and underpinned by robust evidence, inclusive decision-making, and adaptive governance.

The benefits of coherent action are substantial. Integrated policies can reduce duplication, lower long-term costs, and unlock new economic opportunities, including good jobs, and nature-based solutions that enhance resilience. Healthy ecosystems underpin food security, water quality, and disaster risk reduction, while also contributing to public health and wellbeing.

This is why the government will further the work outlined in this report over the coming months and years. The recently published National Security Strategy,[33] Industrial Strategy[34] and Trade Strategy[35] all recognise both challenges, and the incredible opportunities, presented by the net zero, nature positive transition. This Autumn, the government will outline the policies and proposals needed across all sectors of the economy to deliver Carbon Budgets 4-6 (taking us to 2037) and our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), as part of our pathway to net zero. Carbon Budget 7 will be set by June 2026, in line with our statutory duties. This will set out the next phase of our pathway to net zero to continue to secure the economic, societal and environmental benefits of the net zero transition. We will also soon publish a new Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) that will be a key pillar of England's contribution to achieving global nature targets. Ahead of the publication of the fourth National Adaptation Programme in 2028, the government is exploring how stronger adaptation objectives can be set to improve preparedness for the impacts of climate change.

We will continue to take a more integrated and strategic approach across sector-specific policies. The principles set out in the Land Use Framework consultation are being updated and will drive a more strategic and spatial approach to delivering Government's priorities on land.

The government will also double down on this agenda internationally, as 2025 is a pivotal year for the international action required to integrate these issues and to support countries around the world to take action together. Using the levers available to us, including bilateral and multilateral partnerships, international negotiations, International Climate Finance and our world leading expertise, we will support others to take integrated action.

[33] National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World
[34] The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025
[35] UK Trade Strategy

As we approach COP30, we will support other countries to come forward with 1.5°C aligned NDCs which help limit global temperature rises while integrating nature-based solutions. The UK will do this by:

- working with other countries to submit revised NBSAPs to the CBD and prioritise preparation of their 7th National Reports in a holistic manner with climate goals.
- continuing to advocate for greater synergies and cooperation among the three Rio Conventions, through strengthening existing joint work, advocating for further including nature in relevant UNFCCC activities, and climate in relevant CBD activities.
- working closely with Brazil to advance the urgent action needed to protect critical forest basins, including the Amazon, at COP30.
- advocating for more effective multilateral governance where there are currently gaps: with evidence of negative impacts of marine pollution on almost all ecosystem services at a global scale, we continue to support global efforts to agree a legally binding Plastics Pollution Treaty.

We hope that by illustrating our approach to these issues and sharing them with partners we can learn from each other, making the international system and international investments as effective as possible, whilst driving innovation and good policy making at the national and local level. The UK is committed to working in partnership with communities at home and abroad to accelerate progress and set us on track to achieve our global climate and nature commitments.

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