



Recovering Nature for Growth, Health and Security

Natural England's Strategy



Foreword

Nature plays a vital role as the foundation of economic growth. It is essential national infrastructure, alongside transport, energy and communication networks. Yet continued unsustainable use threatens the natural systems that underpin our economy, our health and our national security. Securing the future of these natural systems brings financial certainty and widespread resilience, helping to protect our food and water supplies, and manage climate impacts such as flooding and extreme heat.

To realise the power of nature in sustaining growth, protecting the best of our remaining nature is no longer enough. We need to increase the recovery, regeneration and resilience of ecosystems so that nature can continue to support us into a more secure and equitable future. For nature to recover, people, business and government must see it as a vital investment in our nation's future. As we deliver the homes, jobs and infrastructure needed for economic growth, we must embed nature into the heart of development, ensuring that everyone benefits from green spaces, cleaner environments and resilient ecosystems close to where they live.

The government has made strong commitments in the Environmental Improvement Plan to protect and improve nature. This strategy explains the role Natural England will play in realising these goals. By working with a wide range of partners, and reforming our advisory and regulatory functions, we will turn these plans into action to recover nature at scale, unlocking sustainable growth, housing delivery and long-term public sector savings.



Chair



Chief Executive

Recovering nature and what this means

Nature is our diverse wildlife, stunning landscapes, flowing rivers, dynamic seas and the soils and geology beneath our feet. We are part of nature and wholly dependent upon it. Nature shapes, and is shaped by, our history, culture and land use. It continues to define the places where we live and work; enjoying and caring for nature continues to shape the quality of our lives.

Recovering nature means restoring and enhancing the ecosystems that enable wildlife and people to thrive in a growing population. This is not about going back to a historical fixed state. It is about taking the actions needed for nature to adapt and be more resilient to pressures like climate change.

Strategic recovery of nature, integrated with land and sea use planning, will help deliver the homes and infrastructure we need, strengthen national security and reduce environmental risks and costs. Abundant and diverse nature, restored at scale across our landscapes and seas, will provide greater benefits to everyone, wherever they live. While we, our children and future generations, will experience a different nature, we will all experience more nature that will be wilder, richer and more accessible than today.



Photo: Mayfield Park, Manchester

The difference you will see

We will:

- Shift from isolated interventions to nature recovery happening at scale, ensuring our efforts deliver lasting improvement across whole landscapes and seascapes
- Achieve more by increasingly enabling and trusting others to deliver for nature
- Raise our risk appetite and stay focused on outcomes rather than processes
- Prioritise resources and investment in areas that deliver the greatest benefits for communities and nature
- Move from treating symptoms to tackling root causes: our work will be more strategic, and more ambitious, to create resilient and dynamic nature



Photos: (L): Houlton, Rugby

(R): Paper Butterflies - Horncastle Community Woodland

Success: results that matter

These are the headline outcomes we are working towards, delivering the United Kingdom's statutory environmental and climate commitments, including the Environmental Improvement Plan, Net Zero by 2050 and the legally binding target to halt species decline by 2030.

- Nature is thriving. By 2030, at least 30% of land and sea is effectively managed and conserved, and nature is recovering beyond these places with species abundance and distribution increasing across wider landscapes
- More businesses are actively embedding nature into their operations and investment decisions, for example, using green infrastructure standards to enable housing and infrastructure growth alongside nature's recovery
- More people are engaged outdoors in nature rich spaces every week, and everyone has nature within a 15 minute walk of where they live
- Nature is central to national security, with restored ecosystems giving us clean and plentiful water, bountiful harvests and protecting communities from flooding and heatwaves





Recovering Nature for Growth, Health and Security

Integrating nature to sustain growth and support society into a more secure and equitable future

1

Recovering Nature

Increased scale and quality of places where nature thrives

Natural systems such as rivers, forests and seas are restored

Wildlife is thriving in protected areas, which are better connected

Ecosystems are stronger and healthier

Foundations of Success

- Our People and Organisation
- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Science, Data and Technology



2

Building Better Places

Greener homes and infrastructure create healthier and more investible places

Nature is integrated into development and investment plans

Nature is recognised as an investment that provides returns

Strategic solutions unlock low carbon and high nature development



3

Improving Health and Wellbeing

Build nature into everyday life so people can support, access and benefit from it wherever they live

More nature close to people's homes

Engagement with nature is improving health, wellbeing and prosperity

More opportunities for people to shape and look after nature

4

Delivering Security through Nature

Nature strengthens national security and helps us adapt to climate change

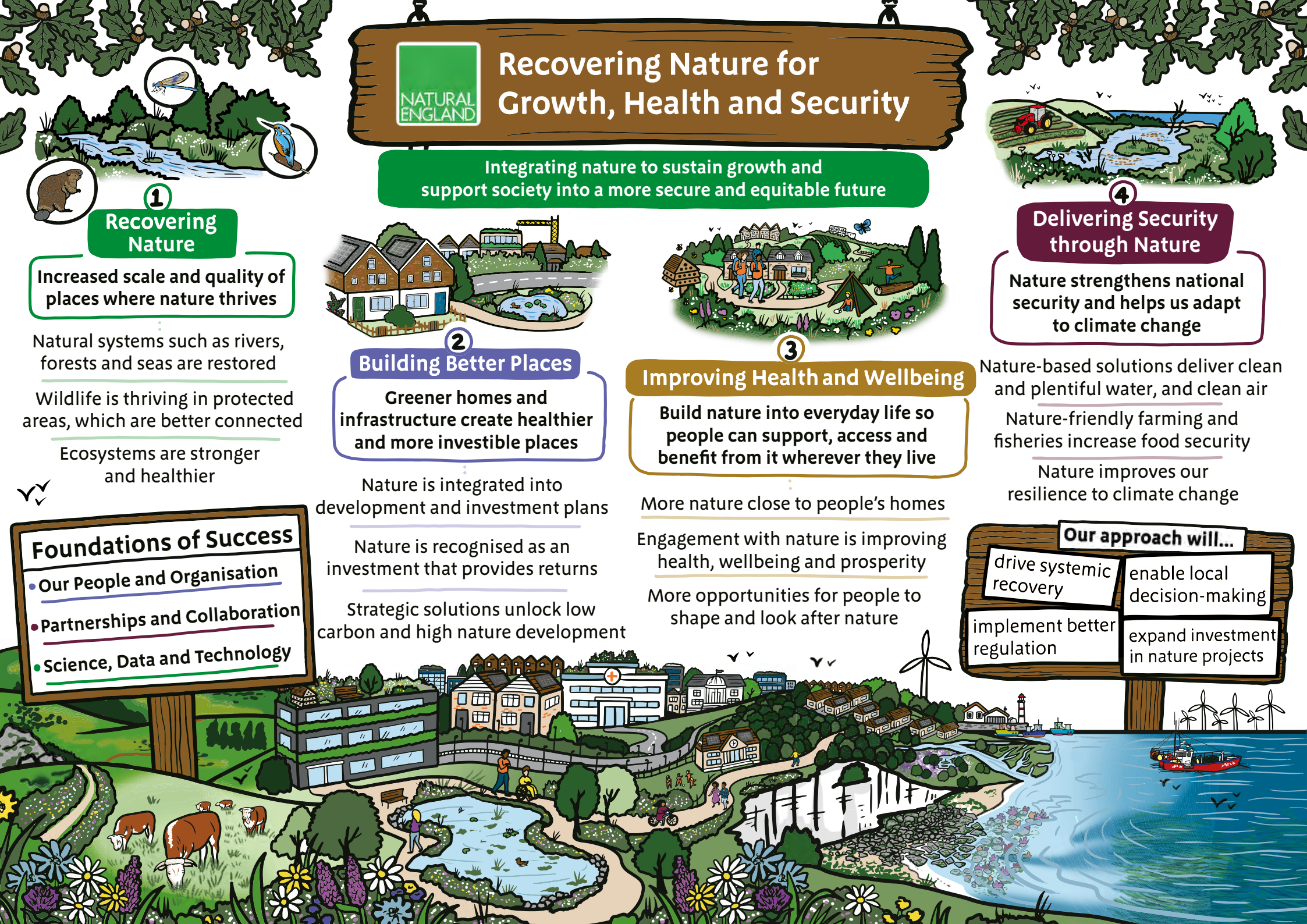
Nature-based solutions deliver clean and plentiful water, and clean air

Nature-friendly farming and fisheries increase food security

Nature improves our resilience to climate change

Our approach will...

- drive systemic recovery
- enable local decision-making
- implement better regulation
- expand investment in nature projects



Strategic Outcomes for Nature

Our strategy is framed through four strategic outcomes. Each of these outcomes reinforces and amplifies the others, and together they address environmental, social and economic actions critical to thriving nature.



Outcome 1: Recovering Nature

Increased scale and quality of places where nature thrives.

What success looks like:

- Natural systems like rivers, forests, wetlands and seas are restored with action focused on reversing the root causes of their decline
- Wildlife is thriving in protected areas, which are connected to and enriching the wider environment
- Ecosystems are stronger and healthier, supporting abundant and diverse species

We will achieve this by:

- Setting the standards for publicly owned land and work across sectors with landowners to inspire and support efforts to recover nature
- Working with National Parks and National Landscapes to define clear pathways to nature recovery
- Growing the National Nature Reserve network through partner owned land and the designation of super National Nature Reserves
- Operating strategic schemes, such as Landscape Recovery, to maximise delivery of sustained nature recovery at scale
- Targeting Protected Site Strategies and Integrated Farm Advice to tackle problems with water, air and soils, and to address climate change impacts
- Funding species recovery projects and partnerships that reduce the risk of extinction to our most threatened species

Case Study:
Bradford and South Pennines

Underpinning Evidence

Photo: East Devon Pebblebed Heaths NNR,
SSSI, SAC, SPA and beyond



Outcome 2: Building Better Places

Greener homes and infrastructure create healthier, more investible places, recognising we live better where nature thrives around us.

What success looks like:

- Nature is designed into development and investment plans from the outset to strengthen communities and benefit growth
- Regulators, businesses, investors and government understand the value of nature as an asset and integrate it into their work
- Reduced bureaucracy and streamlined regulation, with strategic solutions unlocking low carbon and high nature development

We will achieve this by:

- Working with councils, government and businesses to increase the offer and uptake of tools like Environmental Delivery Plans, helping us to build homes and infrastructure that benefit both growth and nature
- Building strong relationships with developers so that nature is planned in from the start to streamline development, reduce risk and add value to projects and investments
- Ensuring Local Nature Recovery Strategies direct investment in nature to achieve regional growth priorities
- Providing joined-up advice to local decision-makers so that they can embed nature in spatial planning and place-based strategies
- Reducing time and costs for development with more self-service regulation supported by standing advice, training and a compliance framework

Case Study:
Greater Manchester's living network

Underpinning Evidence

Photo: Floating reed beds – Bristol



Outcome 3: Improving Health and Wellbeing

Build nature into everyday life so people can support, access and benefit from nature, wherever they live.

What success looks like:

- More nature closer to where people live and easily accessible from home
- People's health, wellbeing and quality of life are improved as a result of living in and engaging with a healthier natural environment
- People form lifelong connections to nature with greater opportunities to shape and look after nature in their communities

We will achieve this by:

- Leading the adoption of Green Social Prescribing into public health policy and plans
- Setting standards for urban green infrastructure and encouraging adoption by offering accreditation as part of the Nature Towns and Cities programme
- Increasing the provision of high-quality inclusive access for all, with National Trails (including King Charles III England Coastal Path) as exemplars
- Providing targeted support to the healthcare, education and employment sectors to integrate nature into their plans, services and land they manage
- Taking every opportunity in our statutory and advice work to increase everyone's access and engagement with nature

Case Study:
Green Social Prescribing (GSP)

Underpinning Evidence

Photo: Green Community Hub



Outcome 4: Delivering Security through Nature

Nature helps us adapt to the threats of a changing climate and improves our national security, supporting more resilient food production, healthy soils, clean and plentiful water and clean air.

What success looks like:

- Nature is embedded in plans and policies as a cost-effective long-term solution to climate change and resource security
- Nature-friendly farming, forestry and fishing improves and supports food production while providing wider societal benefits
- Public and private funding supports nature recovery on land and sea

We will achieve this by:

- Working with partners to create a steady flow of projects for government-approved nature markets
- Using Ecosystem-Based Management to secure healthy seas that benefit coastal communities
- Providing tailored farm advice and using agri-environment funding schemes to improve the quality of soils, water and air, and reduce chemicals impacting nature
- Expanding the use of nature-based solutions such as wetlands and urban greening to reduce flood risk, improve water quality, address water scarcity and protect us from extreme heat
- Working with clean energy providers to become low carbon, high nature across our land and seas
- Setting the standards and developing the frameworks that give confidence for green investments

Case Study:
Lyscombe Farm, Dorset

Underpinning Evidence

Photo: Potting for scallops -
St Mawes, Cornwall



Our Approach

We will combine our actions to maximise impact across our outcomes. Our new approach will be characterised by:

Systemic change in approach

We will support alignment across policies and actions to drive effective and lasting nature recovery by:

- Advising how nature recovery can help policies, strategic plans and frameworks to deliver wider government missions
- Showcasing and evidencing how investments in nature support our economy and way of life

Empowered local decision-making

- We will establish standards and support partnerships to enable locally led, place-based approaches to development and nature recovery
- We will demonstrate, support and step back where we can, enabling others to take on and deliver lasting nature recovery

Better regulation

We will streamline regulation to support innovation, reduce complexity and align with government ambitions by:

- Enabling easier processes for responsible operators while maintaining strong enforcement where needed
- Carrying out our regulatory duties proportionately through our advice on compliance, backed up by inspections and enforcement

Investment in nature projects

- We will drive greater investment in nature by developing and running strategic nature recovery funds, expanding public-private investment partnerships
- We will support the establishment of green finance mechanisms that give investors confidence

Foundations of Success

These foundations of success are essential to delivering our strategic outcomes and are embedded into our changing approach.

Our People and Organisation

To shape our future, we need to continue to be inclusive, collaborative, ambitious and to act with integrity, so that we can deliver the greatest value to society. We will:

- Help our people to be bold, innovative and flexible
- Sustain a culture based on our shared values, which embraces diverse perspectives
- Build professional and functional excellence by supporting staff development, and attracting capable people from the diverse communities we serve
- Take a service-based approach to how we plan and deliver our work to improve clarity and impact
- Embrace digital transformation to boost productivity, future readiness and customer service

Partnerships and Collaboration

Nature recovery demands bold, joined-up action across government, businesses and communities. We will:

- Use our convening power to drive integrated action in places that benefit people and nature most
- Build partnerships and programmes which enable nature's benefits to be realised at scale
- Communicate the benefits of investing in nature-based solutions
- Listen to and learn from our partners to build a common sense of purpose for nature recovery

Science, Data and Technology

Our delivery is powered by science, enabling us to act effectively, remain trustworthy and deliver with impact. We will:

- Use new technology, data science and digital innovation to improve operations, and generate and share the best available evidence
- Monitor and evaluate to understand which actions are making a difference
- Increase our expertise in areas such as Artificial Intelligence and systems approaches, and build digital skills across our teams
- Close knowledge gaps using our own and partners' scientific expertise, so we have the evidence to take risk-based, outcome-focused decisions
- Champion innovation and experimentation to meet challenges and opportunities in a changing climate

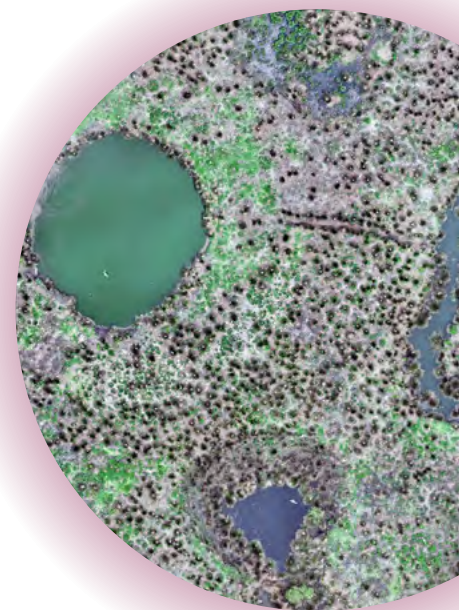


Photo: Gull colony survey using Natural England drone



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