



Ministry
of Justice

Nature Strategy

2026 to 2030

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Foreword



Nature is fundamental to the resilience of our estate. The condition of our natural assets underpins our ability to adapt to a changing climate and continue delivering our critical justice services.

Climate change is already affecting our operations by increasing risks from extreme weather and long-term environmental change. Keeping nature and land in good condition is central to adapting and coping with these impacts. Green infrastructure helps manage water, regulate temperature and reduce flood risk; and these benefits support business continuity and protect efficient running of our operations. Nature-based solutions can also support social and community outcomes, providing opportunities for education and rehabilitation for those in our care.

Good land management represents good value for money. Investing in nature restoration enables smooth planning and delivery, particularly for our prison expansion programmes and our ongoing infrastructure management, often reducing both near-term and whole life costs.

This Nature Strategy sets out how we will embed best practice in our stewardship of the natural environment, ensure land management aligns with estate planning, and use nature-based solutions to manage climate risk effectively.

We must act now. By improving the condition of our land and embedding nature into how we operate, we can build a more resilient, efficient system – one that is better prepared for climate change and continues to deliver justice into the future.

Carl von Reibnitz

Chief Sustainability Officer and Director of
Climate Change and Sustainability Unit

Summary

To ensure the justice system can operate reliably and affordably in the years ahead, we must safeguard nature and manage our land sustainably. A healthy natural environment strengthens the operational resilience of our estate, by helping buildings adapt to a changing climate and allowing expansion projects to progress efficiently and cost-effectively. On the front line, nature and land provides purposeful activity, education and improved health and wellbeing – supporting our operations to deliver justice and rehabilitation.

Our vision is for a biodiverse and resilient estate that supports critical justice services in a changing climate and captures nature's multiple benefits for positive justice outcomes.



The Ministry of Justice and nature

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) estate includes more than 1,200 buildings and 3,000 hectares of land across England and Wales,¹ spanning across prisons, courts, tribunal buildings, probation sites and office accommodation. We have committed to increasing prison capacity by providing 14,000 new places by 2031,² and by constructing three new prisons alongside improving our current buildings. We are already experiencing complex and numerous demands on our available land (e.g. generating renewable energy, property expansions and using space for purposeful work activity), while climate change impacts are increasing (e.g. from storm disruption, overheating and flooding).³ The MoJ strategy⁴ and the cross-government Land Use Framework⁵ steer the futureproofing of the public estate with modern functional design that works together with nature as an asset, and helps keep frontline services safe and operational.

The use of nature-based solutions (such as tree cover providing temperature regulation, or wetlands providing sustainable drainage) is often cost-effective and can complement the performance of traditional construction and engineering. As well as transforming project outcomes, nature-based solutions can also fulfil legal requirements including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Finding innovative and collaborative ways to manage land and nature will help maintain business continuity in hotter summers and wetter winters, and could reduce maintenance demands and costs.

Investing in biodiversity brings multiple benefits that go beyond physical resilience. Prisons with higher levels of green space have lower rates of self-harm and violence,⁶ contribute to raising decency and dignity,⁷ and provide improved surroundings for staff, prisoners and sometimes neighbouring communities.⁸ Good practice at our farm sites can ensure sustainability of prison food production, and environmental work programmes can support rehabilitation through developing new skills for employability, aid healthcare through green prescribing, and increase engagement to improve mental health.^{9, 10}

1 According to 2023 land registry spatial data (unpublished)

2 **10-year Prison Capacity Strategy – GOV.UK** (www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-prison-capacity-strategy)

3 **Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2024: MOJ – GOV.UK** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/climate-change-adaptation-strategy-moj>)

4 **Strategic Asset Management Plan – GOV.UK** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/departmental-strategic-asset-management-plan-executive-summaries-2025-2026>)

5 **Land Use Framework – GOV.UK** (www.gov.uk/government/publications/land-use-framework)

6 **Greenspace in prison improves well-being irrespective of prison/er characteristics, with particularly beneficial effects for younger and unsentenced prisoners, and in overcrowded prisons** – Dominique Moran, Jacob A. Jordaán, Phil I. Jones, 2024 (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14773708231186302>)

7 **Green prisons – A guide to creating environmentally sustainable prisons** (https://cdn.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Green-prisons_-PRI_UNICRI_2025.pdf)

8 **Design Principles for Prison Landscapes – Security, Biodiversity and Wellbeing** (<https://greenprison.co.uk>)

9 **Growing health in UK prison settings** – Health Promotion International – Oxford Academic (<https://academic.oup.com/heapro/article/34/4/792/5020761>)

10 **Mental health and wellbeing benefits from a prisons horticultural programme** – Farrier, A., Baybutt, M. and Dooris, M. (2019), *International Journal of Prison Health*, 15(1), pp. 91-104

In the court system, green spaces can provide safe places for victims and witnesses or juries¹¹ and complement any listed building legal requirements or protected area designations. For people on probation and living in Approved Premises, gardens used as social spaces support the transition back into community living,^{12, 13} and for offenders undertaking Unpaid Work, the reparation hours can repay society by improving shared natural assets (such as rivers and parks) and make efficiencies across government programmes.

The Justice Delivery Plan¹⁴ emphasises the need to deliver multiple outcomes, good value for money and long-term reliability. This Nature Strategy 2026 to 2030 sets out how our action to protect land and biodiversity will be prioritised to support operational resilience and ensure the longevity of multiple benefits for people and services within the justice system.

(Further information on nature-related dependencies, risks, impact and opportunities is available in **Appendix 1**).



11 Personal communication

12 **Impact Report: Greener on the Outside for Prisons** (<https://knowledge.lancashire.ac.uk/id/eprint/15500>)

13 Personal communication

14 **Justice Delivery Plan 2025-26** (<https://intranet.justice.gov.uk/documents/2025/07/justice-delivery-plan-2025-2026.pdf>) (internal only)

Our role and responsibilities

The Dasgupta Review makes clear that nature and biodiversity are an indispensable system, and that safeguarding it is critical for economic stability and responding to long-term pressures on assets.¹⁵ The 2025 call to action in the cross-government Environmental Improvement Plan¹⁶ acknowledges that England is severely depleted of nature (and behind in its progress to address the decline), and that we need a healthy natural environment to conserve GDP over the next decade (committing to measurable improvements across five key areas: restored nature, environmental quality, waste and resources, environmental security and climate change, and access to nature). In Wales, where one in six species are at risk of extinction, the message is similar, and Section 6 details the responsibilities on public authorities to enhance biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems, alongside improving the wellbeing of future generations.^{17, 18}

With significant government-wide commitments, evolving legal duties, and as a member of the National Estate for Nature (NEN),¹⁹ MoJ has a clear leadership role in showing how nature can be integrated into policy, processes and operations. The Environment Act (2021) clearly sets five principles when considering policy design and influence (integration, prevention, rectification at source, polluter pays and precautionary principles), and we share the ambition to restore functioning ecosystems, improve environmental quality and help recover species and habitats. Our Nature Strategy 2026 to 2030 will lead on from our previous Nature Recovery Plan and continue to incorporate biodiversity and land use in MoJ ways of working – modernising our approach to estate management and helping to sustain essential natural capital.

15 **The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review – GOV.UK** (www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review)

16 **Environmental Improvement Plan 2025 – GOV.UK** (www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan-2025/environmental-improvement-plan-eip-2025)

17 **Environment (Wales) Act 2016: biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems – GOV.WALES** (www.gov.wales/environment-wales-act-2016-biodiversity-and-resilience-ecosystems)

18 **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: the essentials – GOV.WALES** (www.gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-act-essentials-html)

19 **The National Estate for Nature Group – GOV.UK** (www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-national-estate-for-nature-group)

Review of 2021 to 2025

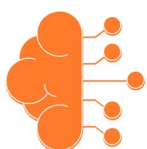
The Nature Recovery Plan 2021 to 2025²⁰ was our first formal commitment towards protecting and restoring biodiversity: working to ensure biodiversity considerations were embedded throughout our daily operations.

The plan was led by nine principles, which together maintained ecological compliance, embedded changing legislation, adopted best practice and developed innovative approaches. By engaging with partners, building knowledge and modernising our data systems, we supported nature recovery while contributing to rehabilitation and reducing reoffending.

Through collaboration with executive agencies, corporate functions and internal and external partners, MoJ has:



Delivered nature recovery projects across the estate, creating or restoring 150 ponds and 50 orchards, and planting 23,000 trees along with 9km of species-rich hedgerow.



Modernised our management of data and ecological protection by establishing digital baselines, developing site-level Ecological Management Plans (EcMPs), updating facilities and land management contracts and proactively leading co-ordinated land use decision making.



Facilitated infrastructure and planning proposals by setting a Biodiversity in Construction policy to maintain standards, promoting early ecological screening to reduce risks, adapting the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) for prison designs and ensuring that complexities around permitted development, BNG and nutrient neutrality are integrated into projects at the earliest possible stage. These actions have helped to preserve delivery timelines, reduce costs and minimise risks to the environment.



Supported green skills and community engagement by supporting staff, offenders and people on probation to develop purposeful activity such as cultivating 100,000 trees annually for planting across the government estate, improving habitat management techniques on our own sites and embracing Unpaid Work and environmental volunteering with national partners such as Canal & Rivers Trust.



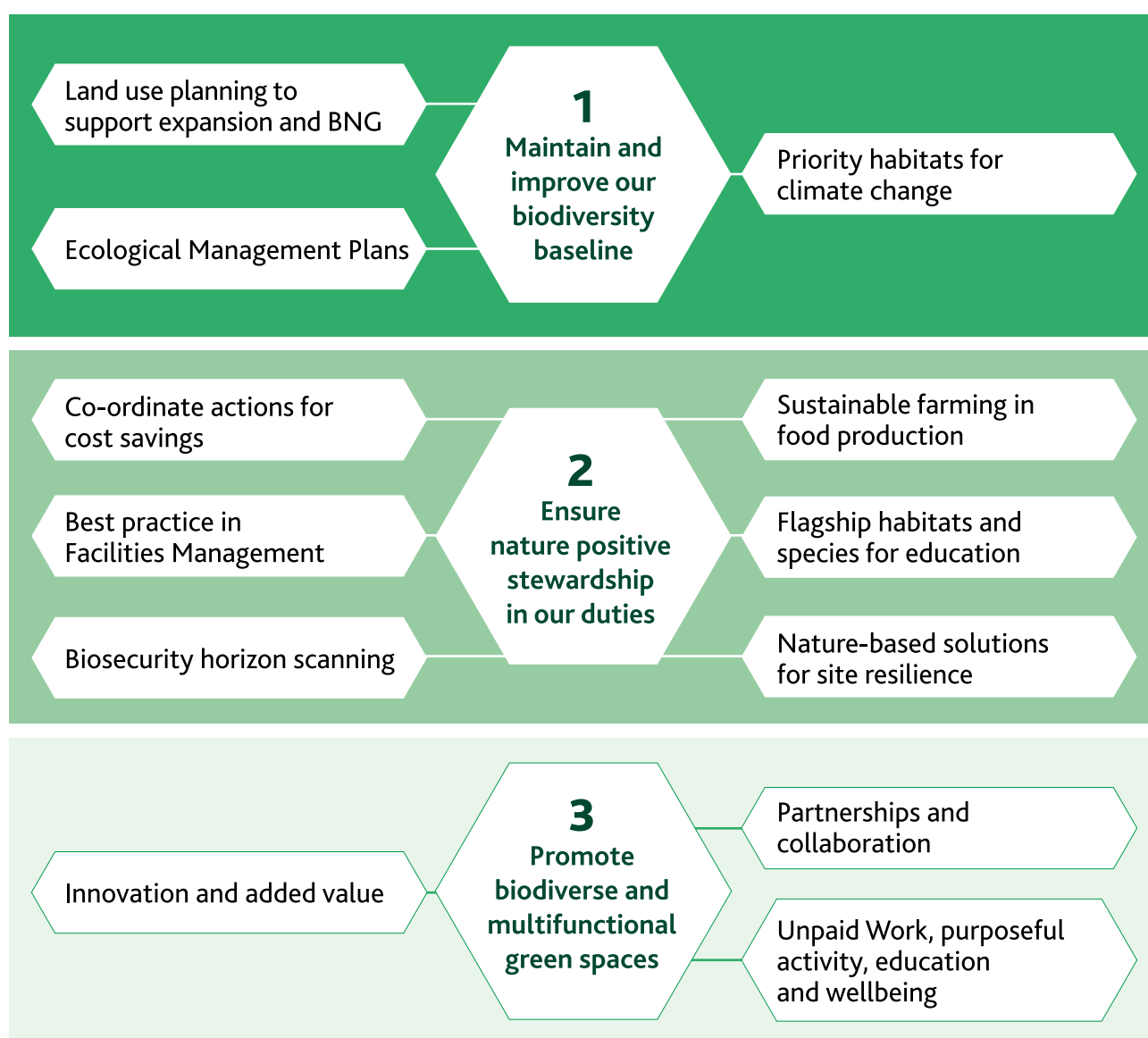
Promoted innovation and best practice through use of social value initiatives, supporting research into natural capital evaluation and accounting, hosting national celebrations of *Nature & People*, initiating Sustainable Farming Incentives and machinery investment, and establishing consistent advice and funding for local biodiversity priorities.

²⁰ **Nature recovery plan summary: MOJ – GOV.UK** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-recovery-plan-summary-moj>)

Our approach for 2026 to 2030

For the period 2026 to 2030, the ethos of supporting nature recovery will continue, but with a focus on three key themes to prioritise operational resilience, efficiency of resources and delivery of wider justice outcomes.

To achieve this, we will require continued collaboration and support of new ways of working. We will encourage learning and development, share knowledge and lessons learned and strive to modernise our environmental data and the way it is used across the organisation. It should be noted that because we are publishing this strategy early in the period, delivery detail and funding may change.



1 Maintain and improve our biodiversity baseline

Throughout the period 2026 to 2030 we will:

- continue to proactively plan and co-ordinate land use and BNG across all His Majesty's Prisons and Probation Services (HMPPS) capacity and expansion programmes. This will reduce risks in delivery, enable cost savings and ensure habitat improvements are tangible and maximised
- continue implementing EcMPs to improve the quality of our large-scale grassland, woodland and wetland, and ensure protection of our priority sites and habitat
- continue our aim to plant 50,000 new trees across the estate and 25km of species-rich hedgerow. We will prioritise projects that focus on multiple benefits (e.g. projects which also provide shading or natural flood management) and take consideration of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to ensure projects are landscape appropriate

2 Ensure nature positive stewardship in our duties

Throughout the period 2026 to 2030 we will:

- lower routine maintenance risks by facilitating co-ordinated environmental screening and assessment at an early stage for all projects
- ensure best practice in facilities management by seeking assurance regarding the protection of biodiversity, and encouraging co-ordinated actions that have multiple benefits or offer cost savings
- support the production of sustainable food by increasing the hectareage of land signed up to Sustainable Farming Incentives (or other environmental standards), with appropriate training and equipment provided
- provide purposeful activity for prisoners which helps improve levels of education and personal wellbeing, through developing projects to increase wildlife habitats and monitor flagship species
- (re)assure our biosecurity measures in line with national strategies and horizon scanning
- support long-term business continuity by ensuring our sites and operations are resilient to the increasing likelihood of heatwaves and flooding²¹ – we will promote a whole-site approach when designing and planning adaptations and seek solutions that are nature based and maintain functioning habitats, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SuDS) or natural flood management principles
- review specifications and share lessons learned within contract and commercial management, to ensure best value for money and effective ecological action

21 **Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2024: MOJ – GOV.UK** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/climate-change-adaptation-strategy-moj>)

3 Promote biodiverse and multifunctional green spaces

Throughout the period 2026 to 2030 we will:

- support the reduction of reoffending and rehabilitation through the creation, retention and enhancement of green spaces that are biodiverse and multifunctional, in line with the Design Principles for Prison Landscapes²²
- communicate the benefits of nature by sharing innovative ideas, sponsoring pilots, promoting access for all, and collaborating to share knowledge and support the longevity and value of projects (e.g. through green prescribing and social value initiatives)
- continue working on national partnerships – particularly those that help HMPPS deliver Unpaid Work or community sentencing, education, healthcare or purposeful activity – while also benefitting biodiversity and the wider environment



²² Design Principles for Prison Landscapes – Security, Biodiversity and Wellbeing (<https://greenprison.co.uk>)

Targets and metrics

Measuring progress on nature recovery is a nationwide challenge, especially where climate adaptations or wider benefits to society need to be captured. We will work closely with the Government Estate for Nature Plan²³ to ensure that working is aligned and effective.

We will continue to deliver our long-term nature recovery targets, set in 2021 and running to 2030:

1. increase woodland quality by 10% (measured in biodiversity units from a 2021 baseline)
2. increase pollinator habitat area by 10% (hectares from a 2021 baseline)
3. achieve 100% favourable or recovering condition for all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
4. plant 50,000 trees across the estate to increase tree cover (23,000 trees planted to date)
5. create an additional 25km of species-rich hedgerow (9km created to date)
6. safeguard the MoJ's contribution to the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, ensuring 30% of land is protected by 2030 (30x30)

To track progress against our long-term ambitions, we will also report annually on:

7. ecological management:
 - percentage of sites (or total area) under positive ecological management, as demonstrated through site management plans or equivalent evidence
8. biodiversity net gain:
 - percentage change in biodiversity units associated with development
9. wetland condition:
 - wetlands assessed (length and/or area) and the proportion where restoration is underway

We also expect to evaluate and report on the contribution of probation Unpaid Work, cost savings or efficiencies made using nature-based solutions for climate adaptations and any research or educational results in promoting biodiverse and multifunctional green spaces.

²³ **Government Estate for Nature Plan – GOV.UK** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-estate-nature-plan-genp>)

Governance

Delivering the Nature Strategy relies on strong governance, co-ordinated planning and successful partnerships across MoJ and wider government. We will review our performance on a regular basis by sharing and reporting to:

Reporting pathway	Frequency	Detail
The National Estate for Nature Group	Quarterly	Private, public and third sector membership group to support the delivery of the terrestrial Environment Act targets and related nature recovery objectives, through action on members' own estates.
MoJ Senior Sustainability Board	Biannually	Provides management oversight and assesses nature-related sustainability performance, opportunities and risks.
MoJ and HMPPS annual report and accounts	Annually	Provides annual public reporting on required nature-related metrics, (e.g. the Greening Government Commitments).
Greening Government Commitments	Annually	Report directly to Defra to summarise department progress in reducing impacts on the environment.
Environmental Improvement Plan 2025	As required	
The Welsh Government	Every three years	Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires all public authorities to report contributions to biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems.
Any relevant cross-government initiatives to ensure the approach to nature and land are aligned and at their most efficient, including:		Taskforce on Environmental Resilience and Efficiency.
		Government Estate for Nature Plan. ²⁴
		Section 6 working group (Wales).

²⁴ **Government Estate for Nature Plan – GOV.UK** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-estate-nature-plan-genp>)

Appendix 1

Nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities

In recent years, we have improved our understanding of climate and wider sustainability implications to MoJ in the context of finance, operations and compliance, and have disclosed these appropriately. Our understanding of the detail regarding nature is evolving and will continue throughout 2026 to 2030.

Dependencies

MoJ relies on healthy and functioning ecosystems to support the long-term resilience of its property and operations. As described earlier, this includes direct support and provisioning services (such as healthy soils for food production) and regulating services (such as local flood management), as well as cultural benefits (such as physical health and mental wellbeing). We are still working on quantifying and integrating nature-related dependencies into investment decisions, project delivery and contract management.

Impacts

MoJ's routine property and land management, as well as decisions of long-term estate planning, can influence nature negatively. Unsympathetic routine maintenance can decrease the condition of habitats, as well as negatively affect species, and uncoordinated infrastructure decisions can result in the fragmentation of nature. We continue to influence and embed processes that aim to avoid, minimise and mitigate these impacts.

Risks

Risks to MoJ through nature loss or poor management can be direct (e.g. financial implications from breaking compliance laws) and indirect (e.g. loss of ecosystem services). Ineffective land management may reduce our resilience to extreme weather and disrupt operations (e.g. flooding or overheating), resulting in expensive temporary solutions, while broader ecosystem degradation could affect the food supply chain. Some natural capital assessment models and case studies, used during options appraisal processes, could be further refined and embedded.

Opportunities

On the other hand, improving the condition and management of nature offers opportunities to enhance resilience, support statutory commitments and deliver long-term value for MoJ. Considerate and landscape-appropriate management within operational activity and expansion can offer restoration and enhancement opportunities – such as orchard creation and grassland restoration. Nature-based solutions can complement engineered infrastructure by reducing carbon emissions, improving cooling and managing flood risk. Building internal BNG capability and integrating habitat creation with renewable energy schemes can improve efficiency and reduce our reliance on external suppliers. There are also opportunities to connect nature initiatives with skills programmes, including Unpaid Work and prison employment, supporting wellbeing and employability outcomes. Realising these opportunities will depend on effective procurement, operational planning, ecological expertise and collaboration across MoJ and wider government.

Follow our sustainable transition at:

[GOV.UK/guidance/ministry-of-justice-climate-change-and-sustainability](https://gov.uk/guidance/ministry-of-justice-climate-change-and-sustainability)



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