



2026

Delivering the UK's nature promises

Tracking progress for nature to 2030: securing our future



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Mid-way through the decade, UK governments are falling short on nature targets. Here's what is urgently needed next.

Three years ago, the world came together to agree a new plan to save nature. 195 countries, under the Convention on Biological Diversity, signed up to an ambitious mission to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030.

Underpinned by a set of action targets, this plan is called the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)¹ (KMGBF). As the decade has unfolded, the importance of nature for interrelated elements like [health, climate and food](#)², and even our [security](#)³, has only become clearer.

Now, we're mid-way through the decade and it's time to take stock. Each country is required to report on progress, and the UK has just released its own report. The verdict: we're not on track. **If we don't ramp up action now, we risk another [lost decade](#)⁴ for nature**, and the science is clear: we simply can't afford to wait.

The good news is that we know what's needed next. Below, the RSPB lays out key actions that the governments of the UK should take to get us back on track. We've focused on 7 of the 23 targets under the KMGBF which we believe are particularly crucial, and for which action across the UK can make a real difference in the next 5 years.





Target 3

Conserve 30% of land, waters and seas

Target summary

Effectively conserve and manage at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas by 2030. This should be achieved through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

UK progress rating: Progress made but at an insufficient rate



Key next steps for the Governments of the UK

- Set **robust criteria and frameworks** for 30by30 on land and at sea, which are aligned with international standards and guidance and have **clear, costed delivery plans**.
- Address insufficiencies in protected and conserved area networks in terms of extent, condition, ecological representation and management. Achieve this by **conducting a marine Special Protection Area (SPA) review**, progressing designations and taking action to improve management of areas already designated.

For example, despite the fact that governments in the UK have a responsibility to classify SPAs for threatened bird species, the SPA network remains incomplete. On land, JNCC has identified major gaps, recommending new sites, extensions to existing ones, and the addition to new species features. At sea, a long-overdue sufficiency review—covering at least 49 species—is urgently needed, especially with seabirds in crisis. Environmental oversight bodies in the UK are now investigating potential government failures to meet legal obligations relating to SPAs.

- **Invest in transparent and robust monitoring** of protected and conserved areas to assess delivery of biodiversity outcomes and enable dynamic management.

Across the UK only around

6%


of land is currently protected and well managed for nature.

At sea, only

0.01%


of the offshore environment (beyond 12nm from shore) is designated as a Special Protection Area.



Target 4

Halt species extinction, protect genetic diversity, and manage human-wildlife conflicts

Target summary

Ensure urgent management actions to halt the extinction of threatened species. Also take action to recover and conserve species to significantly reduce extinction risk, maintain and restore genetic diversity, and manage human-wildlife interactions.

UK progress rating: Progress made but at an insufficient rate



Key next steps for the Governments of the UK

- **Develop, fund, and deliver species recovery plans for threatened species.** With well over a thousand species threatened with extinction in the UK, it is essential that costed recovery plans are put in place in each UK country, and that these are actioned and regularly reviewed.

In particular, ensure the full costing and delivery of seabird recovery plans, given that the UK and the UK Overseas Territories have globally important populations of seabirds (such as Northern Gannets and Manx Shearwaters in UK).

- **Introduce a system of licensing to regulate grouse moor management practices** in England (in line with recent legislative changes in Scotland) and **license the release of non-native gamebirds and Mallards.** Ensure this is underpinned by a statutory code of practice, with mandatory reporting of movements and releases.
- **Ensure the protection and improvement in condition of ancient woodlands** as irreplaceable ecosystems that are key for many species.

Just under

8 million

individual seabirds, from 25 distinct species, breed in the UK.



These include 80% of the world's Manx Shearwaters, yet **seabirds are declining faster than any other group** of birds.



Target 6

Reduce the introduction of invasive alien species by 50% and minimise their impact

Target summary

Eliminate, minimise and or mitigate the impacts of invasive alien species on biodiversity and ecosystem services. This should be achieved by identifying and managing pathways of introduction, reducing rates of introduction by at least 50% by 2030, and eradicating or controlling them, especially in priority sites like islands.

UK progress rating: Progress made but at an insufficient rate



Key next steps for the Governments of the UK

- **Expedite the relaunch of Defra's successful Darwin Plus policy for Overseas Territories with a steady-state budget of £12.8m;** precious biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories (such as the Cayman Blue Iguana) is particularly threatened by invasive species.
- **Enhance the capacity of the GB Non-native Species Inspectorate** to undertake rapid response eradications of newly establishing species such as Asian Hornets and Monk Parakeets. In addition, undertake more regular quantitative assessments to understand how effective the inspectorate has been in preventing the establishment of new invasive species.
- **Develop a coordinated national plan to control the spread of Sitka Spruce** (a widespread commercial conifer species that is now the fastest-spreading plant in the UK, threatening native habitats like woodlands and peatlands). This should include legislative and policy mechanisms to ensure the forestry industry bears a significant portion of the financial burden of removal.

The UK Overseas Territories are home to approximately

94%

of all unique species that the UK is responsible for.



Ben Andrew (ispb-images.com)

Target 8

Minimise the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and build resilience

Target summary

Minimise the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and increase resilience through mitigation and adaptation actions. Use nature-based solutions while minimising negative, and fostering positive, impacts of climate action on biodiversity.

UK progress rating: Progress made but at an insufficient rate



Key next steps for the Governments of the UK

- **Prioritise investing in nature-based solutions (NbS)** for climate adaptation and mitigation, to ensure rates of NbS delivery reach what is required to achieve the UK's net zero by 2050 target. Recognise the extent to which NbS can deliver multiple UK adaptation benefits and mainstream this in policy by **establishing cross-governmental goals and oversight, e.g. with a Minister for Adaptation in the UK Cabinet Office.**
- Enable the nature positive acceleration of renewable energy by **ensuring that actions to reach net zero do not compromise the urgent mission to restore ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss.** This would involve the effective delivery of the mitigation hierarchy, primarily to include avoidance of renewable energy deployment that has negative impacts on nature. For example, on critical wildlife foraging areas at sea or on essential peatland habitats.
- **End subsidies for large-scale forest biomass power** on the grid from 2027. Also, ensure the new Common Biomass Sustainability Framework is strengthened to exclude biomass sourcing that harms nature and climate.



Burning wood biomass emits as much or more CO₂ than coal. Plus, of the millions of tonnes of wood pellets imported every year for burning in UK power stations, many come from protected forests which are home to threatened wildlife. **Forests take decades to centuries for regrowth to offset bioenergy emissions, a timeframe incompatible with the urgency of reducing emissions now.**



Target 10

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

Target summary

Ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably. Contribute to the resilience of these ecosystems and to food security, conserving and restoring biodiversity and maintaining nature's contributions to people.

UK progress rating: Progress made but at an insufficient rate



Key next steps for the Governments of the UK

Agriculture

- **Strengthen the regulatory baselines underpinning agriculture and improve the enforcement** of these regulations to create a level playing field. This would ensure that the UK does not falter in the transition to nature-friendly farming and would help to achieve multiple targets. For example, reducing the impacts of pollution by properly enforcing the Polluter Pays Principle would contribute to achieving GBF Target 10 and would be extremely beneficial to meeting GBF Target 7 (on pollution).
- **Create well-funded, effective agri-environment schemes** to enable farmers to be paid to provide year-round resources for nature. These schemes should follow the Public Money for Public Goods principle and be targeted to deliver the right actions, at the right scale, to address the scale of need set out in an [independent analysis from 2024](#)⁵.
- **Increase access to properly funded advice that empowers farmers** to deliver and drive the transition to nature-friendly farming systems. Good quality advice is essential for restoring nature in agricultural systems. Therefore, agri-environment schemes should be underpinned by increased access to the latest advice and knowledge sharing opportunities.

Fisheries

- **Roll out Remote Electronic Monitoring with cameras (REM) to all vessels** operating in UK waters. This will increase understanding of seabird bycatch impacts and facilitate robust fisheries management decisions.
- **Trial, mandate and monitor effective seabird bycatch mitigation measures** in high-risk fleets.
- **Ensure that all UK Fisheries Management Plans take an ecosystem-based approach** to management that addresses seabird bycatch impacts and seabird prey needs.

Forestry

- **Take a 'Right Place First' approach to tree cover expansion**, avoiding places that are already high in conservation, carbon or community value, or highly productive farmland.
- **Establish woodlands and forestry with greater diversity** of species, structures and silviculture, to increase resilience to climate change, pests and diseases. This greater diversity also benefits nature, climate and people.



Target 15

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

Target summary

Take legal, administrative or policy measures to encourage business and financial institutions to monitor and disclose their risks, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity regularly. Provide information to consumers to promote sustainable consumption to reduce negative impacts on biodiversity, increase positive impacts and reduce biodiversity-related risks to business.

UK progress rating: Progress made but at an insufficient rate



Key next steps for the Governments of the UK

- **Require businesses to measure, disclose, and act on nature** in equivalence with their responsibilities on climate action. Disclosures should also include nature transition plans.
- **Ensure that learnings from Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), and guidance outlined by the [IPBES Biodiversity and Business assessment](#)⁶ are embedded** within the UK Sustainability Reporting Standards to provide a clear framework for businesses.
- **Co-develop Nature Positive Transition Pathways together with industry** to identify sector-level priorities to drive business action.

The World Economic forum estimates that adopting nature positive solutions across key sectors could unlock up to

\$10.1 trillion

in annual business value and create 395 million jobs by 2030.

Target 19

Mobilising \$200 billion per year to biodiversity from all sources, including \$30 billion through international finance

Target summary

Substantially increase the level of financial resources from all sources to implement national biodiversity strategies and action plans, mobilising at least \$200 billion per year by 2030. This involves: increasing biodiversity-related international finance from developed to developing countries (to at least \$30 billion per year by 2030); significantly increasing domestic resource mobilisation; leveraging private finance; stimulating innovative schemes; optimising co-benefits of finance for biodiversity and climate; and enhancing the effectiveness of resource provision and use.

UK progress rating: Progress made but at an insufficient rate



Key next steps for the Governments of the UK

- **Develop a new and updated Green Finance Strategy** to show how public and private sector finance will combine to address the nature finance gap in a holistic, timely and effective manner.
- **Maintain investor confidence in the UK's new carbon and nature markets** by boosting demand and look to channel this investment into nature-based solutions and national nature priorities.
- **Commit to invest in next steps on climate and nature finance and transparency reforms** following COP30. This should include a new, ambitious UK international climate finance target for 2026–2031, with a third ring-fenced for nature-based solutions and with much improved transparency, as well as investing in the Tropical Forest Forever Facility at a level comparable with European peers.



The **Tropical Forest Forever Facility** is a major innovative financing mechanism – currently seeking sponsor capital – designed to reward tropical forest countries for keeping their forests standing

Time for urgent action

By bringing the world together to act, the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework aim to secure a nature-positive future. Yet mid-way through the decade, with 19 of the UK's 23 targets under this global framework off track, it's clear the next 5 years need a different approach. We need to act with urgency, clarity, and with genuine investment.

The above set of actions should help the governments of the UK to prioritise key steps to get back on track. Other actors, including civil society organisations like the RSPB, as well as many businesses and local community groups, are actively doing their bit to curb biodiversity loss. However, it's vital that the governments of the UK play their part; **the ability of the UK to meet these targets depends on actions taken by the governments of the UK today.**

If you have any questions, please get in contact:

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