

Rt Hon Liz Truss MP
The Prime Minister's Office
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5 September 2022

Open Letter from CIEEM Fellows to the new Prime Minister of the United Kingdom: Biodiversity and economics are one and the same; a healthy environment underpins a thriving economy

Dear Ms Truss

Congratulations on becoming Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. While there will be many demands on your time and attention in the immediate future, biodiversity must be one of your priorities.

The undersigned, being Fellows of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) – who are senior experts in the management and protection of biodiversity and drawn from academia and the public, private and third sectors – urge you as our new Prime Minister to:

- a. declare a Biodiversity Emergency, and
- b. engage fully with the forthcoming 15th Conference of the Parties on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15).

Why a Biodiversity Emergency?

The catastrophic global loss of biodiversity is well documented in reports such as the *State of Nature*¹, the *European Environment: State and Outlook 2020*², the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*³, WWF's *Global Futures*⁴, and the Environmental Audit Committee's *Biodiversity in the UK: Bloom or Bust*⁵. This loss has direct negative effects on the economy.

The UK Treasury-commissioned *The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review*⁶, published in 2021, concluded that our economy and wellbeing are all fundamentally dependent on nature, and that our current (and growing) demands on the natural world far exceed its capacity to supply us. The World Economic Forum estimates that over half of global GDP relies on what nature provides⁷ and that 44% of the GDP of cities is at risk of disruption resulting from the loss of nature⁸.

¹ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/state-of-nature-report/>

² <https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer>

³ <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>

⁴ <https://www.wwf.org.uk/globalfutures>

⁵ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6498/documents/70656/default/>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>

⁷ <https://www.weforum.org/press/2020/01/half-of-world-s-gdp-moderately-or-highly-dependent-on-nature-says-new-report/>

⁸ <https://www.weforum.org/press/2022/01/biodivercities-initiative-set-to-transform-global-urban-infrastructure-by-2030/>

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Biodiversity loss clearly threatens the wellbeing and prosperity of both current and future generations.

By declaring a biodiversity emergency, the UK Government can place appropriate policy focus on the urgent need to restore and sustainably manage the natural resources that support us all. Because environmental policy is devolved, the UK Government must work closely with the devolved administrations to make a UK-wide declaration. The biodiversity crisis is of course inextricably linked to the climate emergency and these two crises must be addressed together.

Biodiversity is not a special interest area that is only of concern for Defra, the environment supports the entire economy. We trust that you, our new Prime Minister, will understand that our economy is reliant on the natural world, not external to it, and will appreciate that restoration of biodiversity is in the urgent interest of everyone to maintain food supplies, restore soils, protect communities against flooding, secure clean and adequate water supplies, capture carbon, enhance our mental and physical health, and increase our resilience to the unavoidable impacts of a rapidly changing climate.

We were pleased to see you commit to the Conservative Environment Network's Conservative Environment Pledge⁹ – to deliver net zero by 2050, halt the decline in nature by 2030, and tackle air and river pollution. We look forward to seeing further details and interim milestones that will be used to ensure delivery of these ambitions.

Why is COP15 important?

COP15 will take place in Montreal in December 2022, where the Parties will seek to agree a new post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. COP15 is particularly important as it marks the first conference since the Aichi Targets¹⁰, which consisted of a 10-year strategic plan (2010-2020) and 20 global targets to halt the loss of biodiversity and promote sustainable use of natural resources. Although the UK has made progress in some areas (achieving success in only five target areas), none of the targets have been achieved at a global level¹¹ and biodiversity continues to decline at alarming rates.

COP15 has been delayed for two years due to COVID-19, so the post-2020 Framework to be agreed in Montreal will have only eight years to achieve the overarching aim of halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. This undertaking is at least as significant as the Paris targets on climate change, with similarly high stakes for society. Only by engaging fully at COP15 and beyond will an effective agreement be implemented to turn the tide on biodiversity loss.

Actions that the UK Government could take to help agree and deliver the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

1. The UK Government should further its leadership position on COP15 (building on ambitions stated in Nairobi in June 2022¹²), and you as our Prime Minister should attend the Montreal meeting in person to demonstrate that the UK recognises the importance of nature for the whole economy and society.

⁹ <https://www.cen.uk.com/conservative-environment-pledge>

¹⁰ <https://www.cbd.int/sp/elements/>

¹¹ <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo5/publication/gbo-5-spm-en.pdf>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-takes-lead-to-seek-global-action-on-nature-at-cop15-biodiversity-conference>

2. The UK should push for a strong and legally binding agreement at COP15 that will deliver benefits for all Parties. Action on biodiversity loss can help to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis and economic recession. Indeed, failure to address biodiversity loss will only deepen these social and economic crises.
3. The UK Government should fully resource and monitor the implementation and delivery of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in the UK, taking an adaptive management approach to capitalise on lessons learned when implementing earlier targets. In particular, the statutory nature conservation agencies and local authorities need to be fully resourced (in funding and expertise) to deliver their nature conservation and restoration functions.
4. Once a Biodiversity Emergency has been declared, the UK Government should recognise this as a national priority and assess the impact of *all* policy, economic and social decisions for their impacts on nature, considering direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. This assessment must include impacts on both resident and migratory species, as well as the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.
5. The UK Government should recognise that, while it is already implementing valuable new policies on biodiversity (such as reforms to farming subsidies and the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain for development), these measures alone will not deliver the necessary actions needed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. The UK Government should provide clear policy support to statutory agencies to exercise their existing powers to secure and deliver a meaningful reversal of current declining trends and facilitate the delivery of strategic co-ordinated approaches to mitigation and improvement to support sustainable development.
6. The UK Government must ensure that, in line with the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People¹³ to which it is a signatory and co-Chair, it effectively protects a minimum of 30% of its land and marine habitats for the benefit of nature. The Government has already recognised that some existing landscape designations such as AONB and National Parks do not yet fulfil this requirement and that stronger protection measures are required (as recommended in the Glover Review¹⁴).
7. The UK Government should work with the private sector, NGOs and other parties to mobilise financial resources to deliver the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. All harmful subsidies and incentives should cease and be diverted to activities which support the restoration of nature. Supporting nature's restoration (through, for example, the widespread use of Nature-based Solutions¹⁵) will support our economy, and is especially valuable in times of instability and environmental change to buffer us from the worst effects.
8. The UK Government should recognise that its obligations towards biodiversity do not end at its geographic borders but extend to its entire national value chain. Proposals to reduce the impacts on biodiversity of imported commodities should be strengthened, particularly for those affecting tropical forests, peatlands, and marine and coastal habitats.

¹³ <https://www.hacfornatureandpeople.org/>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>

¹⁵ <https://cieem.net/resource/using-nature-based-solutions-to-tackle-the-climate-emergency-and-biodiversity-crisis/>

9. The UK Government should implement a mandatory requirement for corporations to report on their impacts on nature, in line with the Task Force on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and aligned to climate disclosures.
10. The UK Government should work collaboratively to support developing countries and indigenous people in the UK supply chain to deliver on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and its expert Fellows remain at the disposal of the UK Government to provide advice and support in tackling this complex and urgent issue.

Respectfully,

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