

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/global-futures>

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-lead-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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Thank you for your letter of 5th September to the Prime Minister about biodiversity. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area and would appreciate it if you would share this response with the letter's other signatories.

As we know, biodiversity loss is as urgent, and desperate, as climate change. Security, livelihoods and productivity all depend on it. This matters now more than ever, both for the United Kingdom and our international partners, given nature's critical links to global nutrition and food security. It is therefore crucial that we achieve success at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP15 later this year. This is our chance to agree a 'Paris moment' for nature.

As you mentioned, the Dasgupta Review provides a helpful basis on which to build our calls for ambition. The Review presents a new and comprehensive economic framework that accounts for humanity's dependence on nature. HM Government published its formal response to the Dasgupta Review in June 2021. We agree with its central conclusion: nature, and the biodiversity that underpins it, ultimately sustains our economies, livelihoods and well-being, and so economic and financial decision-making must account for this. The response sets out the ways in which the Government will build on its existing ambitious nature agenda, framed around two high-level commitments:

- Delivering a 'nature positive' future, in which we leave the environment in a better state than we found it and reverse biodiversity loss globally by 2030
- Ensuring economic and financial decision-making, and the systems and institutions that underpin it, support that nature positive future.

Domestically, we are committed to restoring and enhancing nature. Our world-leading Environment Act 2021 puts environmental ambition and accountability at the very heart of Government, by establishing a comprehensive legal framework for environmental improvement. The Act includes a range of specific measures and actions to directly tackle biodiversity loss and sets a new and ambitious domestic framework for environmental governance now we have left the European Union. We have already committed to a legally binding target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030 in addition to setting at least one long-term legally binding target for biodiversity alongside targets for air quality, water and waste reduction.

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In terms of the individual points you mention:

1. The United Kingdom should further its leadership on COP15: The United Kingdom has already played a leading role in pushing for ambition. For instance, in support of the 30by30 target, the United Kingdom leads the Global Ocean Alliance (GOA) and is the Ocean Co-Chair (alongside France and Costa Rica) of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (HAC). While the GOA champions the 30by30 ocean target and ambitious marine outcomes from CBD COP15, the HAC champions a 30by30 target for both land and ocean. Between the two alliances 120 countries now support 30by30 in the ocean and over 100 countries support 30by30 for both land and ocean. We will continue to play this role in pursuit of our objective to ensure that the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) commits us to halting and reversing biodiversity loss globally by 2030.

2. The United Kingdom should push for a strong and legally binding agreement: The United Kingdom is committed to securing an ambitious outcome at COP15 to halt and reverse biodiversity loss globally by 2030. As I have explained above, we have already committed to setting at least one long-term legally binding target for biodiversity in England, alongside our target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.

3. The United Kingdom Government should fully resource and monitor the implementation of the GBF: The four countries of the United Kingdom have agreed to develop a United Kingdom Biodiversity Framework which refreshes the existing Framework for 2022-2030. The collective intention is that the new Framework will set out shared priorities and areas for collaboration across the United Kingdom, supporting a collective response to the post-2020 global framework of goals and targets expected to be agreed at COP15. In England, we will be setting out our ambitions and approach to nature recovery, including our legally binding targets and our approach to meeting them, in our Environmental Improvement Plan, due to be published in 2023.

4. The United Kingdom should assess the impact of all policy, social and economic decisions on nature: To deliver the transformational change needed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, mainstreaming biodiversity into decision-making across all sectors and at all levels of government is essential. The Greening Government Commitments (GGC) Framework sets out the actions that Government departments and their agencies will take to modify their environmental impact, drive rapid action and set ambition for the future. For the first time, the 2021 to 2025 GGC Framework requires all departments to develop and deliver Nature Recovery Plans. At present, all public bodies, including Government departments, currently have a legal duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to have regard to conserving biodiversity overall when exercising their functions. This duty has been strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 so that authorities will have to consider the action they can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity and then take that action. The Environment Act 2021 also places a legal duty on Ministers of the Crown to have due regard to the Environmental Principles Policy Statement when making policy.

5. The United Kingdom should provide clear policy support to statutory agencies to exercise their existing powers to secure and deliver a meaningful reversal of current trends: We are working closely with our public bodies on nature recovery policy and programmes. The package of measures introduced under the Environment Act includes Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Species Recovery Strategies and Protected Site Strategies which Natural England are working to implement and which will provide a clear steer to public bodies on the steps we want to take for nature recovery. Our Environmental Improvement Plan will set out how these strategies will support delivery of our ambitions for nature recovery.

6. The United Kingdom must effectively protect a minimum of 30% of its land and marine habitats: The United Kingdom's commitment to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030 provides a clear focus and direction for the delivery of HM Government's wider Environmental targets and Nature Recovery objectives. On land, 28% of the United Kingdom and 26% of England is currently designated as a protected area. We recognise, however, that many of these areas are not delivering for nature as they could. In England, we will strengthen our existing network of protected sites and landscapes, improving their value for biodiversity and extending them and identifying other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).

7. The United Kingdom Government should work with the private sector, NGOs and other Parties, to mobilise financial resources to deliver the post-2020 GBF: In order to ensure that the post-2020 GBF drives global action, it must be supported by an uplift in financing for nature from all sources (public and private) and at all levels (domestic and international). In January 2021, the Prime Minister committed to spending at least £3 billion of the United Kingdom's International Climate Finance over the next five years on climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity. In September, at the UN General Assembly, we launched the 10 Point Plan for Financing Biodiversity, in collaboration with Ecuador, Gabon and Maldives, which has received endorsements from 17 countries to date.

8. The United Kingdom Government should recognise that its obligations towards biodiversity do not end at its geographical borders but extend to its entire national value chain: The United Kingdom recognises that supply chains and associated impacts on biodiversity extend beyond its geographical borders, and we are committed to addressing these. At COP26, 28 countries came together to launch the Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade roadmap to deliver sustainable trade and reduce pressure on forests and other critical ecosystems, including support for smallholder farmers and improving the transparency of supply chains.

We have also introduced world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Act to help tackle illegal deforestation in United Kingdom supply chains. Our law will make it illegal for larger businesses operating in the United Kingdom to use key forest risk commodities produced on land illegally occupied or used. Businesses in scope will be required to undertake a due diligence exercise on their supply chains, and to report on this exercise annually. We ran a consultation from 3rd December 2021 to 11th March 2022 to seek views on the details of regulations that will implement the Environment Act provisions, to ensure that these are designed effectively. The Government published a summary of responses to this consultation on 1st June 2022 and is committed to implementing due diligence provisions at the earliest opportunity through secondary legislation. This new legislation is one part of a wider package of measures to improve the sustainability of our supply chains and will contribute to global efforts to protect forests and other ecosystems.

9. The United Kingdom Government should implement a mandatory requirement for corporations to report on their impacts on nature: Government actions alone are not enough to halt biodiversity loss. The private sector, including the finance sector, have a critical role to play. HM Government is supporting the market-led, global Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) which is set to provide a risk management and disclosure framework for corporates and financial institutions to report and act on evolving nature-related risks. The TNFD will support a shift in global financial flows away from nature-negative outcomes and toward nature-positive outcomes.

10. The United Kingdom Government should work collaboratively to support developing countries and indigenous peoples to deliver on the post-2020 GBF: Scientific and technical cooperation and capacity building will be essential to achieving the targets. The United Kingdom fully supports enhanced capacity building and development, and scientific and technical cooperation for the post-2020 biodiversity framework. We believe Parties should facilitate and promote an enabling environment that allows all Parties to collectively build on and enhance capacity building and development and technical and scientific cooperation. The development of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans should be underpinned by needs-based and directed capacity building and development guidance to ensure it is fit for purpose to support Parties in the implementation of the post-2020 GBF. The United Kingdom recognises the critical guardianship provided by Indigenous Peoples and local communities in protecting tropical forests and preserving vital ecosystem services, and the global contribution they make to climate change mitigation, biodiversity preservation, and inclusive and sustainable development.

I hope this letter is helpful and thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



THE RT HON LORD BENYON