



Delivering the

# UK Government's Nature Recovery Agenda



Chartered  
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Management

# 7 actions the Government should take to deliver nature's recovery

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- 1 Develop and implement plans to deliver the targets and goals in the Environment Act 2021
- 2 Put nature at the heart of new towns and housebuilding plans
- 3 Fully fund and resource the public bodies delivering for nature
- 4 Develop and introduce a new land use framework with nature recovery as a core tenet
- 5 Double the funding and improve advice to farmers and land managers to deliver nature recovery
- 6 Support the growth of, and diversity in, the nature-related green economy
- 7 Incentivise nature positive business and finance

## Introduction

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Nature is in trouble. There is robust evidence<sup>1</sup> for an ongoing UK and global decline of nature. A fifth of Britain's mammals are at high risk of extinction<sup>2</sup>, and that rises to a quarter globally<sup>3</sup>. The UK's flying insects, including pollinators and natural crop pest control species, have declined by 60% in the last 20 years<sup>4</sup>. Across the UK, all species have declined by an average of 19% since 1970<sup>5</sup>.

The combined effects of human activities have put an estimated one million species at risk of extinction, threatening the stability of ecosystems and the services we receive from them. For example, more than 75% of global food crop types rely on animal pollination, meaning declines in pollinator diversity and abundance have severe implications for human food production<sup>6</sup>.

In the UK, there are serious implications for water and air quality. Freshwater and coastal water pollution from sewerage discharge and agricultural runoff impacts not just biodiversity but also the economy due to unclean bathing

waters, impacts on tourism, angling and shellfish fisheries. Furthermore, there are insidious consequences for the more than 70% of our designated nature conservation sites that are over their critical loads for nitrogen-based air pollution<sup>7</sup>.

A recent Green Finance Institute report<sup>8</sup> states that "Damage to the natural environment is slowing the UK economy, and could lead to an estimated 12% reduction to GDP in the years ahead – larger than the hit to GDP from the global financial crisis or Covid-19." Further to this, The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)<sup>9</sup> and The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review<sup>10</sup> have both shown how completely dependent our economy is on a healthy, functioning natural environment.

But there are practical, effective solutions available to us – and a wealth of economic and employment opportunities that come with them.

# About CIEEM

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CIEEM (pronounced “sy-eem”) is the leading professional membership body representing and supporting over 8,000 ecologists and environmental managers in the private, public and eNGO sectors in the UK and Ireland.

Our vision is for a healthy natural environment for the benefit of current and future generations, and we have publicly committed to addressing the triple interlinked crises of nature loss, climate change and inequality<sup>11</sup>.

CIEEM members collectively offer ecological knowledge and expertise that is unrivalled in the UK context and whose professional purpose is to provide objective, practical and evidence-based advice and support to decision-makers at all levels, to help secure more positive future environmental outcomes.

Further to this, CIEEM members work across the UK nations, UK Overseas Territories, and the Republic of Ireland and embody the cross-border dialogue and cooperation needed for nature’s recovery, which is after all not constrained by political boundaries.



# Here to Help

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CIEEM and its expert members are committed to supporting the newly-elected Government and devolved administrations in ensuring that the UK meets our national and global environmental ambitions and targets.

We would like to use our collective expertise to contribute to policy and practice development, working in partnership to share ideas and implement transformative change that will once again enable the UK to be at the forefront of protecting and enhancing our natural environment.



# How Government can Take Forward Nature's Recovery

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## 01 | Develop and implement plans to deliver the targets and goals in the Environment Act 2021

CIEEM welcomes the new Government's commitment, as set out in the pre-election manifesto, to take positive action to meet the Environment Act 2021 targets.

However, time is running short. We therefore ask Government to urgently consult with the public, private and eNGO sectors to develop and publish a realistic but purposeful implementation plan for each of the targets and goals. These plans should set out how, led by the Government but with strong collaboration and partnership working, we can work together to halt and reverse the dramatic loss of biodiversity. The roles of different organisations and bodies in delivering the plan should be clearly defined and their obligations to discharge those roles should be made binding upon them. As the professional body for ecologists and environmental managers working in all sectors, CIEEM is well positioned to support such collaboration.

These plans should dovetail with a review and refresh of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). Already behind on delivering the targets and goals in the EIP, we are asking Government to accelerate its delivery and include a target for bringing protected sites into favourable condition and a new commitment for National Parks to contribute to nature recovery. This would contribute to the UK's international commitment to have 30% of our land and sea set aside for nature recovery by 2030<sup>12</sup>.

## 02 | Put nature at the heart of new towns and housebuilding plans

Delivering the targets and goals in the Environment Act and the EIP will be important steps towards meeting the Government's commitments on nature, but we believe that this Government can go further and be more ambitious. Care must be taken to ensure that all future legislation and policy does not directly or indirectly cause regression of environmental protections, but rather furthers ambitions for nature's recovery.

In delivering the new Government's commitment to growing the economy, the challenge will be to persuade colleagues in other Departments that protecting and restoring the environment can support economic growth. There is ample evidence to support this and CIEEM is willing and able to advise.

As part of the economic growth agenda the Government has set out ambitious housing targets. We welcome the commitment to strategic use of 'grey belt', 'green belt' land and brownfield sites, but would caution against a presumption that brownfield sites are not rich in biodiversity. We also urge the Government to actively engage in the implementation of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in England. We are at a critical stage in the rollout of this approach and targeted Government guidance and support will be key to its consistent implementation, building public trust and confidence, and making the Government a leader in delivering nature-positive planning. As advocates for good practice in BNG delivery, and given the involvement of CIEEM members in its delivery, we have a number of insights into the steps

that need to be taken to ensure that BNG delivers for people, planning and nature.

Although BNG itself is a move in the right direction, there are serious concerns, based on emerging evidence, that the 10% requirement for BNG will in fact only achieve a “no net loss”<sup>13</sup> of biodiversity. CIEEM therefore asks Government to redefine the exemption list to create a statutory minimum gain for biodiversity for exempt applications and those below the de minimus threshold, and to actively encourage and support local authorities to go beyond the minimum 10% net gain requirement on new developments (as some already are) with a view to increasing the minimum to 20% once developers, local planning authorities and other stakeholders are more familiar with the process.

### 03 | Fully fund and resource the public bodies delivering for nature

The public sector plays a crucial role in achieving nature restoration and climate action goals. They coordinate and implement restoration projects, enforce environmental protections, support environmental data centres, and engage local communities and the private sector.

However, relevant Government agencies and local authorities currently lack adequate resources to work effectively to restore nature and have seen an alarming loss of experience and scientific expertise.

Government must prioritise funding to ensure that experienced and expert staff are retained, and that junior staff are valued and incentivised to stay and develop within its agencies. In particular, pay parity must be addressed across the government’s nature conservation agencies.

Government should strengthen the ability of regulatory bodies, including the Office for Environmental Protection, to take enforcement and legal action by building their capacity to do so. We further recommend re-

establishing the necessary distance between these bodies and Defra.

Furthermore, funding must be made available for local authorities to consistently implement and enforce policy and legislation, such as the Biodiversity Duty on public bodies<sup>14</sup> and Local Nature Recovery Strategies. This funding must be long-term, allowing public bodies to plan beyond single year budget cycles. For example, all local authorities need to be supported so that they have sufficiently skilled and competent in-house ecologists to identify opportunities to fulfil the strengthened biodiversity duty.

Biodiversity considerations are an important part of the planning decision-making process, and we welcome the Government’s manifesto commitment to fund more planning officers but further urge the Government to include provision for local authority ecologists and biodiversity officers in that provision, to facilitate a streamlined planning process.

### 04 | Develop and introduce a new land use framework with nature recovery as a core tenet

There are multiple pressing demands on the limited land available, including housing, infrastructure development, food production and space for nature. A new land use framework, to which the new Government has already committed, is needed to join up spatial planning across these demands in a holistic and strategic way<sup>15</sup>.

infrastructure and development planning, food production, climate resiliency and adaptation planning, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Environmental Land Management Schemes, designated nature conservation sites, and Biodiversity Net Gain delivery must be brought together to enable strategic planning for the benefit of people and nature. Government priorities for economic development, food security and biodiversity recovery can work synergistically, rather than conflicting with and frustrating each other. The Government’s stated intention to focus on the redevelopment of so-called ‘grey belt’ land, for example, could become the engine house that

funds environmental enhancement projects elsewhere in the retained Green Belt that is hitherto not meeting its significant potential for contributing to nature recovery.

Government must ensure that a nature strategy using the Lawton Principles<sup>16</sup> – “more, bigger, better, joined” – is at the heart of the nature recovery aspects of the new land use framework, which is underpinned by high quality data and evidence.

CIEEM and its expert members are well positioned to contribute to the development of the new land use framework and would welcome the opportunity to facilitate this process.

05

### **Double the funding and improve advice to farmers and land managers to deliver nature recovery**

Farmland makes up about 70% of our land, so it would be impossible to address the loss of nature without active engagement and support from our farmers and land managers.

Government should increase public spending on environmental land management schemes by doubling the sums currently available. These schemes must work at different scales, be targeted, and align with other initiatives such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategies. A long-term, consistent and supportive subsidy approach will help to restore trust in the farming and rural community – but should also be in conjunction with proper enforcement of existing legislation. Combined, these will increase the benefits from on-farm nature conservation and restoration, and at the same time continue to support our farmers and rural communities, both economically and in terms of nature services. These services include, using the restoration of traditional floodplain hay meadows<sup>17</sup> as an example, huge but presently untapped carbon sequestration potential, pollination, flood alleviation and soil regeneration. Moving to more nature-friendly farming practices would have further benefits including improving water and air quality.

In order for farmers to deliver food security and contribute to nature’s recovery, they will need access to a range of expertise and advice. Farming practices designed to manage and store carbon, protect soils and water, restore biodiversity and improve air quality must become more commonplace whilst also enabling farmers and land managers to produce food and other resources in ways that are profitable and sustainable.

Trusted and competent advisers who can position themselves as part of the farm business team will be key. CIEEM has previously worked with partners to produce new guidance on undertaking the farm environmental adviser role and produced useful resources as well as developing a Farm Environment Adviser Competency Framework<sup>18</sup>. CIEEM asks the government to support the provision of a professional, informed and farm business-centric approach to providing environmental advice to maximise the benefits of the environmental land management scheme.

06

### **Support the growth of, and diversity in, the nature-related green economy**

We must transition to a green economy and the newly-elected Government has committed to clean energy, delivering net zero and to creating 650,000 new high-quality green jobs. There have previously been funding streams for supporting and expanding the green economy, such as the Green Investment Fund, but there has historically been and currently is very little in these schemes for nature, despite the evidence showing that nature-based solutions often provide excellent value for money.

Given the multiple benefits from nature recovery, Government must commit to allocating funding in any new support packages for the green economy to explicitly include an allocation for nature-related jobs as part of a wider green skills strategy. Without this support there will not be the workforce to deliver on our national and international targets and ambitions for

nature's recovery. Government must support the growth of a nature-focused workforce in the private, public and NGO sectors, to not only meet its environmental ambitions, but also to grasp the opportunity to provide the high-quality green jobs of the future.

There is currently a skills shortage in the ecology and environmental management sector due to the emergence of BNG and other Environment Act instruments. Compounding this, research by Defra's Nature Skills Working Group (part of the Green Jobs Delivery Group under the previous government) estimated that we will need a 13-15% increase in the number of people working in nature-related green jobs by 2030 if we are to achieve our biodiversity targets and policy ambitions over the next 10-15 years. These are jobs across the public, private and eNGO employment sectors. This comes during a capacity crisis<sup>19</sup> that is leading to overwork, burnout and loss of people from the profession<sup>20</sup>.

Government must actively support and endorse the ongoing development of new vocational routes into nature-related green jobs, including, for example, apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps and other skills-based qualifications to help grow a much-needed profession.

The Government should also support action to improve diversity within the nature-based workforce, which is disappointingly low. CIEEM is leading the way through its Green Jobs for Nature initiative<sup>21</sup>, its engagement of diversity champions and its push for more accessible vocational routes into nature-based jobs but we need the government's support. CIEEM suggests this is done by establishing a body to oversee the delivery of a green skills workforce strategy, which explicitly includes considerations for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Government can further support this progress by improving access and connection to nature for all sectors of society. Access to, and interaction with, nature is often cited as a motivating factor for people to consider an environmental career, as well as

being the driving force behind better future environmental stewardship and improved health and wellbeing (and so reducing the burden on the NHS). Government should be proactively seeking to bring nature into communities, by embedding natural greenspace into the Local Plan process and setting ambitious requirements in urban settings, and by integrating nature into all levels of the national teaching curricula.

## 07 | Incentivise nature positive business and finance

We recognise the critical role that business and finance can and must play in nature recovery. Some enterprises can be directly beneficial to biodiversity, such as regenerative agriculture and biodiversity restoration – but all businesses must also play their part. However, to fully unleash this potential, business and finance will require appropriate support, guidance and regulation – including for example a consistent approach to, and quality assurance of, nature trading.

The viability and scalability of nature-enhancing businesses are contingent upon access to adequate funding. Government must incentivise and support these enterprises, through for example funding grants, subsidies and tax incentives (and removing them from nature-negative business practices, with impacts often falling on the public purse to remedy), and low-interest loans (for example by updating the Government Green Book<sup>22</sup> to incentivize nature positive investment). Such interventions not only support the creation and ongoing support for nature positive business development and expansion, but also signal a commitment to a future where economic prosperity is inseparable from positive environmental stewardship. CIEEM recommends that the Government initiates a cross-stakeholder group, which CIEEM would be happy to convene, to take this approach forward.

In keeping with the polluter pays principle, all business and finance must also become more aware of and accountable for their

impacts on nature. Moving in this direction not only benefits nature but can also ensure business resiliency through sustainable business practices and supply chains. CIEEM urges Government to provide the necessary infrastructure and imperative to enable businesses to assess their impacts on natural capital, including for example by adopting the natural capital approach, and specific processes such as the newly published tools and guidance from the Task Force on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures. We ask that Government creates a mandatory requirement for a disclosures<sup>23</sup> framework with transparency, and that Government also tightens the rules and controls on financial institutions lending money to investors and projects not providing a positive impact for nature.

In 2021, two separate reports found that the overall financing gap for nature was estimated to be £4.6bn per year<sup>24</sup> or £56 billion over the next 10 years<sup>25</sup>. This is money that needs to be spent over and above current funding. Government must commit to its part of this funding, but public funds and charities/philanthropy will not currently cover the amount of finance needed for nature's recovery. The private sector must play its part in this recovery and evidence shows that it will benefit from doing so. Government must act to facilitate public-private partnerships (PPP) for the benefit of nature recovery. This can be done by ensuring clear regulatory frameworks, facilitating stakeholder networking and match-making, and investing in public sector processes that support PPP.





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