

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 2AA

The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London, SW1A 2HQ

11 February 2025

Subject: The Value of Nature

Dear Prime Minister and Chancellor,

We are writing on behalf of the below professional bodies and learned societies to express our deep concern about the increasing tension between development and nature conservation. The prevailing narrative from the Government often suggests that we must choose between building homes for people and protecting our natural environment, and that nature is somehow a blocker to growth without the evidence to show this is the case. However, choosing between homes or nature is a false dichotomy. With the right legislative and policy drivers, and expert engagement, we can achieve both – delivering much-needed housing while ensuring that our natural environment is protected and enhanced for the benefit of people, the economy and biodiversity itself.

The 2021 Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity, commissioned by HM Treasury, made it clear that nature is not just a luxury but a fundamental asset to our economy and society. Nature provides the essential ecosystem services that underpin our health, our sustainable food production and our resilience against climate change, to name just three. The Dasgupta Review highlighted that our economy is embedded within nature – not external to it – and that failing to account for this leads to unsustainable economic growth and environmental degradation. If we continue to deplete our natural capital without replenishment, and continue the narrative that nature is a problem, the long-term consequences for our economy, public health and overall well-being will be severe.

The economic benefits of nature-based solutions are well-documented, for example in the 2011 National Ecosystem Services Assessment. Green and blue infrastructure, such as urban parks, wetlands and reforestation projects, can reduce flooding risks, improve air quality and enhance mental health – ultimately reducing public health costs. Biodiversity-rich areas increase property values, boost tourism and provide jobs in conservation, restoration and sustainable land management. By integrating nature into housing and infrastructure development we can create more resilient and desirable places to live and work. This is the principle of better place-making – the golden thread of sustainability running through the development planning system.

However, to achieve this balance, the Government must work closely with ecologists, planners, landscape architects and other environmental and sustainability experts to develop innovative solutions. This means ensuring that new developments incorporate nature from the outset – through Biodiversity Net Gain and other policies, and through well-

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designed green and blue spaces and improved planning frameworks that prioritise sustainable land use. It also means investing significantly more in nature restoration, ensuring that our commitments to biodiversity and climate targets are not just met but exceeded.

As leaders of this nation, you have the opportunity to redefine our relationship with nature and set a precedent for sustainable growth. We urge you to:

1. **Act on the findings of the Dasgupta Review** by embedding natural capital accounting into economic decision-making and policy frameworks at all administrative levels of central and local Government.
2. **Engage with professionals in ecology, planning and sustainability** to develop innovative housing, landscape and infrastructure solutions that integrate and enhance nature at all spatial scales.
3. **Support policies that promote nature-positive development**, ensuring that new homes and other infrastructure contribute to, rather than diminish, biodiversity.
4. **Significantly invest in nature recovery initiatives**, ensuring that economic growth is not at odds with environmental stewardship.
5. **Adequately invest in and support government agencies and local authorities** to enable the effective delivery of nature recovery, and to create the necessary conditions for private investment in nature recovery innovation and enterprise.

We are already one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. The public supports a future where people and nature thrive together. With the right approach, the UK can lead the way in demonstrating how economic prosperity and environmental protection and enhancement can go hand in hand. We collectively urge you to show leadership in this policy space now, informed by the best available evidence and expertise.

We look forward to your response and to seeing a stronger commitment from the Government to ensure that nature is valued, protected and integrated into our planning and development frameworks at all levels.

Yours sincerely on behalf of the below organisations,

British Ecological Society (BES)
Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT)
Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)
Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)
The Environmental Policy Forum (EPF)
Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF)
Institute of Fisheries Management (IFM)
Institution of Environmental Sciences (the IES)
Institution of Royal Engineers (InstRE)
The Landscape Institute (LI)
Society for the Environment (SocEnv)