



The Wildlife Trusts'

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

1

Bring back the UK's lost wildlife. The UK is home to species found nowhere else on Earth. But immense pressure from decades of pollution and habitat loss has driven wildlife into catastrophic decline. Nature is declining at a speed never previously seen and shows no sign of slowing. It is no longer enough to just protect the wildlife that remains – we need the next Government to put nature into recovery, on land and at sea, by the end of the next Parliament. Nature is vital to us all – for the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the space to help us feel secure, happy, and healthy.

1 in 6 species in the UK is now at risk of extinction

2

End river pollution and water scarcity. The UK is ranked as one of the worst countries in Europe for water quality, with pollution beyond legal limits caused by a toxic cocktail of sewage and agricultural pollution. Over 40% of river quality target failures are caused by agriculture and land management and in 2022 alone, raw sewage was discharged into waterways over 300,000 times. Our rivers are no longer suitable homes for wildlife, they are not fit for people to swim in, and we are seeing water availability decrease before our eyes. This is a crisis – and one which the public wants to see urgently resolved.

The state of our rivers is a national disgrace

3

Fund wildlife-friendly farming. The destruction of nature and the impacts of climate change are the biggest threats to food security in the UK. Food production relies on healthy soils, clean water, and a stable climate. But farming is too often unsustainable. By supporting farmers to shift towards regenerative, nature-friendly methods, farming has huge potential to deliver a green rural renewal. Working with nature can increase farm profits and resilience, reduce costs, and maintain or even improve yields. Many farmers and land managers have gone to great lengths to support wildlife but without being adequately rewarded. The budget for environmental farming has already fallen by a third since 2010. Not investing properly means everyone loses.

Farmers should be justly rewarded for restoring nature

4

Enable healthy communities. Right now in the UK, poor quality living conditions are damaging people's health and cutting lives short. It is the most disadvantaged and the most vulnerable who are bearing the brunt of this situation. Those living in the most deprived areas are ten times less likely to live in the greenest areas. The current situation is unfair – but it does not have to be like this. Improving access to natural, wildlife-rich places where we live, learn and work will transform people's lives, improving health, happiness and hope.

More than one third of the population are unable to access green places near their home

5

Tackle the climate emergency. Climate change is driving nature's decline, and the loss of wildlife and wild places leaves us ill-equipped to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to these changes. One crisis cannot be solved without the other. The UK has a target of Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Nature can make a massive contribution to achieving this, or an even more ambitious target – but only if we restore our damaged ecosystems.

We are in the midst of a climate and nature emergency, and the two are inextricably linked

“Nature recovery is fundamental to tackling climate change and improving people's lives – history will not be kind to politicians that ignore this truth.”



The landmark 2023 State of Nature Report has shown that the UK – already classified as one of the world’s most nature-depleted countries in the world – is continuing to allow nature to decline.

The Wildlife Trusts are calling upon all political parties to commit to a plan to finally halt and reverse this trend. Their policies must be targeted towards species recovery, addressing water pollution, funding wildlife-friendly farming, enabling healthy communities, and tackling climate change.

Alongside Wildlife and Countryside Link’s Nature 2030 proposals, we want these asks to ensure all parties stand on a platform with nature’s recovery at its heart.

It has never been more evident that people care more about the state of their natural environment than ever before. With a general election on the horizon, it’s time politicians heard that message.



Our priorities to all political parties are:



Bring back the UK’s lost wildlife

Make more space for nature to halt its decline. 30% of land and sea protected and managed for nature by 2030.

Stop damage to Marine Protected Areas by properly protecting them, banning destructive practices and avoiding development.

Bring wild beavers back to every county helping to restore lost wetlands, benefitting all kinds of wildlife and reducing flood and wildfire risk.



End river pollution and water scarcity

Enforce the law by empowering and sufficiently resourcing environmental watchdogs to monitor and respond to pollution incidents.

Halve nutrient pollution by 2030 by stopping rainwater from overwhelming our sewage system and agricultural pollution from leaching into our rivers.

Deliver stronger protection for chalk streams to prevent these rare habitats from being regularly polluted and dried out, killing vulnerable wildlife.



Fund wildlife-friendly farming

Increase the budget for wildlife-friendly farming to at least £4.4 billion a year, ensuring a fair transition for farmers, healthier and affordable food and better habitat for wildlife.

Halve pesticide use and maintain all bans on bee-killing and human health harming neonicotinoids once and for all.

Help farmers adapt to climate change by embedding mitigation into farm payment schemes and providing guidance on how to farm with nature to increase resilience.



Enable healthy communities

Commit to a cross-Government fund to grow community-based health services to save the NHS money and improve health and wellbeing at scale.

A Right to a Healthy Natural Environment guaranteed through law, protecting nature, improving people’s physical health and reducing eco-anxiety to improve mental wellbeing.

Give every child the best start in life by producing guidance for outdoor education in schools to support happier, more confident children who understand their impact on our natural world.



Tackle the climate emergency

Help nature and people adapt to climate change by integrating climate change across all UK Government policies and connecting up habitats, to make them more resilient.

Protect our Blue Carbon by monitoring levels and protecting them from damaging development and activities.

Upgrade energy efficiency for homes by rapidly expanding home retrofit schemes to reduce emissions and energy bills.