

It's not too late to reverse biodiversity decline by 2030, UK's five leading nature bodies say

Greater action, investment and embracing natural solutions are crucial to reversing biodiversity decline by 2030, the five UK statutory nature agencies say in a new report published today (Wednesday 22 September).

It marks the first anniversary of the Leader's Pledge for Nature, which has been signed by over 80 Heads of State from around the world.

Natural England (NE), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), NatureScot, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) have together launched a new report – Nature Positive 2030 – which sets out how the UK can meet its commitments in the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, and ensure that nature's recovery plays a critical role in our path to Net Zero.

Findings from the joint report shows that achieving nature commitments will deliver huge benefits to human health, well-being and our economy, and will require transformative change across society and in the way we protect, value, use and engage with nature. The Nature Positive 2030 report draws on a wealth of experience and innovation in the UK to present solutions that can be scaled up to achieve change.

The report showcases the importance of utilising natural solutions to tackle climate change, highlighting the essential role of nature in helping us survive our uncertain future, and emphasising that nature's ability to do so depends upon biodiverse ecosystems that are resilient to the changes ahead. Delaying action for nature will lead to greater economic costs, and increased environmental risks.

The report also stresses the important role of nature in supporting human health and well-being, as demonstrated through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nature Positive 2030 sets out the priority actions and achievable steps for becoming "Nature Positive" – reversing biodiversity decline – by 2030, and concludes that we are currently not on track to becoming nature positive by 2030, but that this aim is achievable. The report recommends nine changes that can be delivered rapidly, by national and local governments, landowners, businesses and others that will have particularly high impacts on reversing biodiversity loss this decade. These are:

- Ensuring wildlife thrives within protected areas on land and at sea.
- Better conserve wildlife habitats outside protected areas, in particular those areas identified as parts of nature networks or as important blue/green infrastructure.
- Investing in habitat restoration and creation to strengthen nature

networks that deliver for biodiversity and climate change.

- Ensuring outcomes for nature are integrated in development plans on land and at sea.
- Tackling atmospheric and diffuse water pollution, especially from nitrogen and ammonia.
- Developing the market for green finance.
- Deploying nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation by default.
- Developing the UK's evidence base so that it is ready to support the larger, transformative changes underway.
- Adopting targets to become nature positive.

The report stresses the need to put our ambitions for nature recovery on the same footing as those for climate change – those individuals, businesses, cities and governments that are striving to become Net Zero need to become nature positive too, including through adopting targets for nature, and taking nature positive actions such as through establishing wildlife habitat on land-holdings and gardens, ensuring nature is enhanced through supply chains, and using the power in our wallets to choose nature-friendly options in what we buy.

The priority actions identified in Nature Positive 2030 are about building a nature-rich future, with restored ecosystems that are more resilient to climate change and provide more benefits to more people.

Natural England chair, Tony Juniper, said:

Nature recovery is within our grasp – we can become Nature Positive by 2030, provided we act now. We need to go high nature and low carbon, tackling the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change together, and today's publication sets out how we can do this.

In the past year Heads of State from many countries, including from the UK, have made hugely important commitments to recover nature, in recognition that this is essential to our health, well-being and a sustainable, prosperous economy. Achieving these commitments will require transformative change across society and in the way we protect, value, use and engage with nature. We believe these commitments are achievable and our report shows how we can succeed in becoming Nature Positive by 2030 as an essential milestone on the path to full nature recovery.

Clare Pillman, Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales, said:

Restoring nature is our primary defence against climate breakdown, and this report demonstrates the collective ambition of all four nations of the UK to do just that.

While our window of opportunity is small, we know that real change can happen when governments, groups and individuals work together to protect our climate and natural world. Natural Resources Wales is committed to that effort.

We hope this report stimulates crucial conversations and triggers a wave of action amongst decision-makers around the world, providing an example to others of what it means to achieve environmental growth for the benefit of future generations.

NatureScot Chief Executive, Francesca Osowska, said:

It is everyone's responsibility to be nature positive. We know the twin crises of climate change and nature loss are inextricably linked – we do both, or do neither.

Scotland is stepping up to the challenges we face so that we can deliver our ambition of a nature positive future.

So, as we prepare to host COP26 in Glasgow, this is a crucial time to take bold, positive action for both nature and the climate.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee Chairman, Professor Colin Galbraith, said:

This is a key year for nature, climate change and for our future wellbeing.

This report makes a key contribution by showing how we can all help achieve a nature positive world. The report highlights a range of case-studies from across the UK that demonstrate how we are already helping nature recover. Whilst these examples show what is being done, everyone can play a part in future, helping to achieve a nature positive world by 2030, every contribution counts!

Importantly, the publication of the report provides an evidence base drawn from across the UK that supports the work to achieve ambitious global agreements for climate change and biodiversity at the forthcoming global conferences on biodiversity and on climate change.

The report shows that the UK is leading by example, and that the commitment to a Nature Positive world by 2030 is already creating examples of nature positive management on land and in our marine areas.

Paul Donnelly, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), said:

Healthy nature sustains us. However, our biodiversity is under severe pressure, at a time when we have never been more in need of it to counter the impacts of climate change.

Achieving a nature positive future and restoring our natural capital is essential for our health, well-being and prosperity. We all have a role to play in safeguarding, restoring, and reconnecting with nature. The UK Nature Positive 2030 Report helps show how this can be done. The examples, including those from Northern Ireland, show that positive action is happening and delivering for nature and people. We need to build on and accelerate these actions to ensure that we are building resilient nature for now and for future generations.

The report will support UK activities at international and domestic levels, as we work to achieve ambitious global agreements for climate change and biodiversity at COP26 and COP15, providing the evidence base to demonstrate that the UK is leading by example.

- The report will be available here after 00:01 Wednesday 22 September: www.jncc.gov.uk/nature-positive-2030
- Nature Positive 2030 is a publication by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, NatureScot and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.
- A partner pack of quotes is available here: <https://we.tl/t-Zz0988IcUm>