

Lords debate on the UK's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan on 13 March 2025

6 March 2025

This briefing is on behalf of environmental coalition Wildlife and Countryside Link ([Link](#)).

We ask peers to attend Thursday's debate in the Lords led by Lord Grayling on the UK's strategy for biodiversity and conservation.

The UK Government's plan to meet international nature targets, known as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), was published last month.¹ While the publication of the plan is welcome, it is not clear if the actions set out genuinely add up to achieving the UK's global nature commitments.

We urge peers to press the Government to demonstrate UK leadership and help address biodiversity decline domestically and internationally by incorporating all international biodiversity targets in the revised Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) to support the implementation of global targets in England. In common with other environmental targets in the EIP, this should include allocation of responsibility for delivery, along with evidence-based policies and funding needed to achieve delivery.

The Government should keep the NBSAP under review and report regularly to Parliament on progress, adding detail and increasing effort as necessary to achieve the targets.

Background

The 2022 Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (known as CBD COP15) agreed an ambitious set of 4 goals and 23 targets to halt and reverse the loss of nature across the world by 2030.² This Global Biodiversity Framework includes landmark commitments for nature, such as the commitment to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 (known as '30x30').

Parties to the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) are required to set out national targets and publish National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs), detailing how they will contribute to the achievement of the GBF. Effective domestic delivery plans are critical, after the last set of international

¹ UK's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-biodiversity-strategy-and-action-plan>

² <https://www.cbd.int/article/cop15-cbd-press-release-final-19dec2022>

nature targets, the 2011–2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets were comprehensively missed due to a failure in national-level implementation.³

The UK launched its NBSAP during continued COP16 negotiations last month in Rome.⁴ This was a welcome publication, helping to demonstrate the UK's commitment to the international biodiversity negotiations and domestic delivery of targets. The document brings together plans from each of the UK's four countries and is intended to set out how the UK as a whole will work to achieve international nature targets. In England, the Environmental Improvement Plan should set out a detailed delivery plan for England's contribution to the GBF commitments.

The NBSAP outlines the UK's contributions to the GBF targets (first published in August 2024)⁵, however, it does not set out specific contributions required from each UK nation to meet overall UK targets. It is also not clear whether existing policies, actions, and funding in each country are sufficient to achieve domestic targets.

With biodiversity in sharp decline in the UK⁶ and across the world,⁷ worsening the climate crisis by limiting natural tools to both mitigate and adapt to climate change, the economic, social and human health costs of failure to meet GBF targets would be significant.⁸ Meeting the global nature goals is vital for people, nature and the economy.

Domestic progress to date on global nature goals

Analysis published by Wildlife and Countryside Link in October 2024 on policy progress in England towards the targets in the GBF showed action in many areas had stalled or even went backwards.⁹ Out of 26 goal areas, England was judged to be 'in the red' with no progress made on more than half (14 of the 26), with policies currently expected to be inadequate to meet targets in all areas.

The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) also found that the Government is largely off track to meet its environmental ambitions.¹⁰ While progress has been made in some areas, such as air pollutants and chemical pollutants, the OEP's analysis of the Environmental Improvement Plan found

³ <https://www.wcl.org.uk/new-era-for-nature-needed-after-lost-decade.asp>

⁴ UK's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-biodiversity-strategy-and-action-plan>

⁵ <https://ort.cbd.int/national-targets?countries=gb&recordTypes=nationalTarget7>

⁶ <https://stateofnature.org.uk/>

⁷ <https://www.wwf.org.uk/our-reports/living-planet-report-2022>

⁸ See World Economic Forum Global Risks report:
https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2023.pdf

⁹ <https://www.wcl.org.uk/action-needed-to-get-uk-back-on-track-ahead-of-cop.asp>

¹⁰ <https://www.theoep.org.uk/report/government-has-chance-get-track-meet-legal-environmental-commitments-window-opportunity>

that the Government is largely off track to achieve the majority of its environmental targets and commitments, including the apex goal of achieving ‘thriving plants and wildlife’.

During the General Election campaign, Labour took the welcome step of committing to revise the EIP, to make it a better vehicle for achieving Environment Act targets and the internal review of the EIP has now concluded.¹¹ **The revision of the EIP is a vital opportunity to ensure global nature targets are delivered domestically, but crucially missing from the review thus far is an analysis against the Global Biodiversity Framework.**

The Environment Act and existing EIP commitments already pledge England to delivering some of the global nature targets, including 30x30 and halting the decline of species abundance by 2030, but there are notable gaps. For example, there is no commitment in the EIP in line with GBF Target 2 on restoration of degraded ecosystems or with Target 6 on eliminating or mitigating invasive species. These are important and useful targets to help achieve the apex target of halting nature’s decline and wider sustainable development.

Action needed to meet targets

To meet global biodiversity targets, swift and significant action is needed. Environmental policy in the UK is devolved across the four nations and action to deliver the UK’s NBSAP must be taken forward in each of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In England, to support delivery of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets, the Government should:

- **Commit in the revised Environmental Improvement Plan to delivering all of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets**, alongside existing Environment Act target and other EIP commitments.
- **Identify where gaps exist in domestic delivery of global nature goals and introduce new policies, actions and funding as needed** in the revised Environmental Improvement Plan and the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review to ensure all targets are met. This should include increased public investment to address the nature finance gap, an increase to the nature-friendly farming budget to support the delivery of nature targets and sustainable land management, and the introduction of a Nature Recovery Obligation for high-impact industries.
- **Build on the existing NBSAP to iterate and improve the plan as needed**, ensuring each country’s contributions genuinely add up to the UK’s overall targets, and that delivery in each country is on track. The Government should review and report regularly to Parliament on progress against the GBF targets and the UK’s NBSAP, adding detail and increasing effort as necessary to achieve the targets.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan-rapid-review>

The UK played a crucial role in agreeing the Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022 and continues to be a leader at global biodiversity negotiations. With the targets, framework and funding now largely agreed, now is the time to back up the UK's ambitious commitments with domestic action. We urge the Government to seize this opportunity to improve the natural environment in the UK.

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is the largest nature coalition in England, bringing together 86 organisations to campaign for nature, climate, animal welfare and a healthy environment for everyone. Wildlife and Countryside Link is a registered charity number 1107460 and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales number 3889519.

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