

Wildlife and Countryside Link 25 year plan for nature

Introduction

The 11 headlines below represent Link members' views on the essential components of a 25 year plan for the natural environment as a whole.

We recommend that the 25 year plan be:

- Developed and delivered through an integrated approach, coordinating input and resources from all Government departments
- Subject to a broad, open consultation, including the public, business and civil society
- Scrutinised by a Select Committee of the House
- Published within 12 months, giving time for consultation, but allowing for the early action necessary to achieve the targets already established in *Biodiversity 2020*
- Supported by an effective framework of monitoring and reporting on agreed outcomes

The architecture of a plan

We recommend that the 25 year plan:

1. Sets out a new vision for a thriving natural environment

Developed in consultation with the public and stakeholders, this vision for nature should illustrate the importance of the protection and recovery of biodiversity, landscape character and natural capital, as well as improving public access to green spaces for the UK's economy, society and well-being. By connecting people with nature, and increasing our natural wealth, it should set the UK on a course where protecting and enhancing nature and our landscapes are the cornerstones of our long-term economic plan and the transition to a sustainable, resource efficient and low-carbon economy.

2. Establishes overarching goals for government for the protection and recovery of nature

To realise the vision, the protection and recovery of nature should be a high-order objective of all Government policy. Clear objectives should be established for a full range of natural assets including species, habitats, water, air, land, seas and minerals. These should apply across Government and overall responsibility should rest with the Prime Minister.

3. Contains clear objectives and five year milestones with accountability to Parliament

To ensure the necessary effort is invested now to take us to our long-term goal, the plan should set out clear objectives and five-yearly milestones against which government can monitor progress and be held publicly to account, informed and updated by independent scientific advice.

4. Sets the right institutional framework and aligns resources, for meeting environmental goals across Government

This should include a stronger Natural Capital Committee, with responsibility for setting and reviewing milestones, as well as the impact of new law and policy on their achievement. The development of the plan should be based upon the recommendations already made by the Natural Capital Committee. The plan should identify essential national and local Government functions (including statutory agencies), and areas of spending that can be used to protect and enhance natural capital.

5. Builds on existing policy and legislation

The plan should include a review of policy affecting nature, such as planning, economic and fiscal policy, to ensure they contribute to the achievement of the natural environment goals. It should include a timetable for full implementation of vital European Directives. New mechanisms

will be required to mainstream nature into decision-making, stimulate innovation in the way we capture the value of our environment in public policy and consumer decision-making, facilitate new markets to generate funding and income for the countryside and to drive private sector innovation and investment in areas such as infrastructure development, planning policy and macroeconomic management.

6. Ensures the terrestrial and marine planning systems enhance landscapes and nature, delivering an ecological network

The plan must enhance protection and management of special places, both rural and urban, linked within a wider landscape that makes room for people and nature - an ecologically coherent network on land and at sea. Regulators will need access to high quality ecological expertise and information to enable them to plan and manage nature-positive development, infrastructure and other activities, including the provision of natural and green spaces.

7. Delivers for our seas as well as land

Our seas are under threat and still need considerable action to reverse their decline. The plan must include measures to deliver an ecologically coherent network of well managed marine protected areas to protect biodiversity and deliver ecosystem services. A suite of measures to tackle fisheries, pollution and wider biodiversity issues are also needed if our seas are to achieve Good Environmental Status by 2020.

8. Supports people working together for nature

The engagement and contribution of communities is essential for conservation. The plan must enable people to benefit from and contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural world—including businesses, local communities and the health sector—through civil society cooperation, improved Local Nature Partnerships and local involvement in strategic planning. It should set out how learning from, and connection to, nature can be improved for our children.

9. Sets out stronger safeguards for threatened species and habitats

As well as protecting and restoring nature in the wider landscape, the plan should include stronger safeguards for protected species, habitats and landscapes that are at risk, so that our wildlife and habitats are protected and restored across the UK.

10. Includes the UK Overseas Territories and our impact on natural capital abroad

The plan should improve natural capital in our Overseas Territories, meet international commitments and set an example of responsible governance. It should incorporate metrics to measure UK impacts and dependence on key commodities such as carbon, forests and fish in other countries.

11. Has a statutory basis

To ensure the plan is viable beyond the life of this Parliament, to give certainty to businesses and landowners, and to create the goals and implementing powers needed to give the plan a strong backbone, key elements of the plan should be underpinned by legislation and/or by regulatory mechanisms.

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