

The UK government has made a commitment to halting biodiversity loss by 2010.

This leaflet summarises what this means, what is needed to achieve this target and how progress should be measured.

Biodiversity is the variety of life on the planet. This includes the plant and animal species that make up our wildlife and the places or habitats in which they live. The world is losing biodiversity at an alarming rate and we are starting to experience accelerating environmental change.

Biodiversity is important to us for social, cultural and economic reasons. It enriches our lives and provides vital services on which our lives depend e.g. saltmarsh as flood protection. Although there are many, often unmeasured, practical reasons for conserving biodiversity, there is also a very strong ethical case for not destroying other forms of life that share the planet with us.

There are three key elements to halting biodiversity loss in the UK:

1. Protect, enhance and aid recovery of threatened species and habitats.
2. Protect our finest wildlife sites and ensure appropriate management.
3. Make space for biodiversity i.e. make our farmland, forests, rivers and oceans a more wildlife friendly place to live.

Put another way we must 'stop the rot, protect the best & restore the rest'.

1. Protecting and enhancing threatened species and habitats ('Stop the rot')

In 2002, a third of the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and a quarter of BAP species were still declining. The UK is committed, through the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, to a target of ensuring that at least 60% of threatened species are safe by 2010. In 2002, just 22% of BAP plant species were stable or increasing. This shows the scale of the challenge.

- What is needed:**
- Revised BAP species and habitat priorities, so that resources can be targeted to where they are most urgently needed.
 - Adequate monitoring of all UK BAP priorities.
 - An increase of at least £100 million per year, through both agri-environment schemes and targeted recovery programmes, across the UK for delivery of UK BAP targets.
 - Increased habitat restoration, recovery and re-creation through positive planning; to provide larger, more robust, spaces for wildlife and people.
 - A duty on all public bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to further biodiversity conservation (as exists in Scotland).

Performance Indicator:
No BAP priority species and habitats 'still declining' by 2010.

2. Protecting and managing our finest wildlife sites ('Protect the best')

Marine sites
The Government has committed to establish:

- A marine Natura 2000 network by 2008 with management objectives in place by 2010.
- An ecologically coherent network of OSPAR (The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic) Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by 2010.

In addition to international commitments, it is essential that MPAs are established to protect the UK's nationally important biodiversity. In Safeguarding our Seas, the Government's Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Development of our Marine Environment (Defra, 2002), a target was set to identify and designate relevant areas of the UK's seas as areas of marine protection belonging to a network of well-managed sites by 2010.

What is needed:

- New Westminster Marine Bill to receive Royal Assent by the end of 2008.
- The Westminster Marine Bill to provide for a network of effective Marine Protected Areas (to encompass Highly Protected Marine Reserves (HPMRs), Nationally Important Marine Sites (NIMs), and OSPAR MPAs), to be designated in parallel with Natura 2000 sites.
- Bespoke marine legislation from the devolved administrations, in parallel with the Westminster bill (the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish administrations all have responsibility for nature conservation out to 12nm).

Performance Indicator:
A complete MPA network (including Natura 2000 sites, OSPAR MPAs, nationally important marine sites and Highly Protected Marine Reserves) identified and notified by 2010.

Terrestrial and Freshwater Sites

In England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales slightly different targets operate on slightly different timescales and affect a different suite of sites, but the principle remains the same - protect the best sites and quickly. Biodiversity and/or Environment strategies in each country should be consistent and include:

- Complete condition assessments for all sites;
- All listed features used as criteria for assessing condition;
- Designation of all sites as a matter of urgency;
- Identification of major problems;

3. Making space for biodiversity ('Restore the rest')

Protecting our finest wildlife sites and saving our threatened species will not be sufficient to halt biodiversity loss; we also need to prevent common and widespread habitats and species from becoming rare. We need to create a more sympathetic and robust natural environment so that wildlife can have a chance of responding to climate change. This is in addition to tackling the causes of climate change. We therefore need to build biodiversity considerations into all land and aquatic use policies and programmes while, at the same time, increasing access to the quality of life benefits that biodiversity brings.

Performance indicator:
95% of UK A/SSSIs in favourable condition by 2010.

Deliver positive planning to protect and enhance biodiversity:

- Develop and implement shared landscape scale visions at a local authority level (100% of UK with agreed landscape scale visions for biodiversity by 2010).
- Identify and safeguard space for biodiversity through the planning system so that no family is more than 300 metres from at least 2ha of green space rich in wildlife by 2010.

Improve education and public understanding:

- Ensure that all children have contact with biodiversity and the natural world as an integral part of their school career.
- Put sustainable development into practice:**
- Improve management of the public estate (Government and local authority owned land). Ensure 80% of the public estate has biodiversity management plans or prescriptions by 2008 with 100% in place by 2010.
 - Promote sustainable land and sea use opportunities that further biodiversity conservation (e.g. responsible recreation and tourism).

Performance Indicators:

There are many potential indicators for each of these areas but we suggest the following are key:

- By 2010, there should be a positive trend in the indices for farmland and woodland wild bird populations, for bats and for butterflies.
- By 2010, all school children should have gained experience of the natural world through out-of-classroom learning as an integral part of school education.

Conclusion

The clock is ticking and biodiversity is being lost. The international commitment to halting biodiversity loss by 2010 is an ambitious one... but essential. The UK must ensure we meet, or exceed, our own targets towards conserving the world we live in and leaving a country rich in biodiversity for all who follow us. We need to start delivering the actions identified in this leaflet now. Please take time to consider what you can and should be doing.



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environment link
Northern Ireland Environment Link
Telephone: 028 9045 5770
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LINK
Wildlife and Countryside Link
Telephone: 020 7820 8600
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Wales Environment Link (Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru)
Telephone: 01970 611621
www.waleslink.org

The Link organisations bring together environmental voluntary organisations in the UK united by their common interest in the conservation and enjoyment of the natural and historic environment. There are four Link organisations in the UK.

- Northern Ireland Environment Link
- Scottish Environment LINK
- Wales Environment Link / Cyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru
- Wildlife and Countryside Link

Each Link is a coalition organisation, representing a number of environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These NGOs are voluntary sector, non-profit-distributing organisations. The Links aim to add value to the work of individual organisations by facilitating information exchange and collaborative working amongst members on issues the members choose.

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COUNTDOWN
2010
Halting the loss of biodiversity

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Halt the loss of biodiversity

HALTING BIODIVERSITY LOSS BY 2010
STOP THE ROT, PROTECT THE BEST AND RESTORE THE REST

