

A CSR for Nature and People

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is the largest environment and wildlife coalition in England, bringing together 62 organisations to use their strong joint voice for the protection of nature and animals.

Summary

- Investment in nature at this spending review will further the levelling up agenda by **widening access to better health, securing the natural resources our economy depends on** and **delivering thousands of jobs**.
- In the previous decade Governments across the UK have missed their targets and commitments on nature, with delays on delivery exacerbated by the Covid19 pandemic. This has had negative consequences for our health, wellbeing, and prosperity. The UK Government's own figures show that, [public funding for nature declined by 29% between 2012/13 to 2017/18](#)
- As the UK Government works to change this record and position itself as a world leader on climate and nature in advance of COP26, we have seen higher ambitions brought forward with commitments to a ["nature positive" future, reversing biodiversity loss globally by 2030](#) and [legally binding domestic targets](#).
- This increased ambition now need to be backed up by costed plans and green budgeting to increase investment in nature, and to realise the levelling up benefits such investment will provide.

Three ways the spending review can widen access to better health, secure the natural resources our economy depends on and deliver thousands of jobs

Investing to achieve a "nature positive" future

Specific funding will be required to:

1. Provide levelling up health and wellbeing benefits, and new green jobs, through access to nature: at-least an initial £5.5bn over a three-year period (£1.83bn p.a.).
2. Restore and protecting habitats and species to halt the decline of nature by 2030: an additional £2.62bn p.a. is needed across the UK.
3. Underpin our environmental commitments through advice, enforcement, data and capacity-building: an additional £502m p.a.

This investment to widen access to nature and to meet nature targets will need to be financed through direct government spending or new debt financing instruments.

Greening finance of wider government spending decisions

Changing the way government' factors nature into decision making is crucial and requires:

1. Effective Green Book implementation across government to reflect the full value of biodiversity and natural capital in investment and policy choices.
2. Strategic environmental screening of all future government spending and taxation policies to ensure that the UK's annual budgets and multi-year spending reviews support a net zero, nature

positive transition (starting with application of a 'net zero test' to the 2021 Spending Review and Autumn Budget).

3. Publication of the results of this analysis alongside fiscal/budget reports, together with a summary of how this information was used to inform fiscal policy decisions.
4. A new green procurement policy to ensure the governments annual spend on goods and services sets the standard for the private sector.

Expanding private sector investment in nature

Government can facilitate much greater private investment into nature if it:

1. Properly finances the public bodies who will be required to oversee new markets
2. Develops and enforces effective market rules and standards
3. Ensures consistency and coherence between the new investment opportunities.
4. Establishes the right criteria for new green bond issues and the UK Investment Bank (UKIB) to invest, and leverage further funding into biodiversity and natural capital investments.

Background: Ambitions have been raised, it's now time to invest in delivery

There is a funding gap for delivery on the ground. Government figures show that public sector spending on biodiversity in the UK [was just £473 million in 2018/2019](#), a decline, in real terms, of 33% over the past 5 years which corresponds to just 0.02%, of UK GDP. This is less than the current annual budget allocation of [£500 million](#) for pothole repairs.

The downward trend in our financial commitment to protect the natural world is mirrored by results in nature, with [41% of UK species in decline](#). Further [Research](#) from the Natural History Museum, shows that the UK not only comes bottom of the list for G7 countries in terms of the amount of biodiversity retained but is also third from the bottom across all European countries. As our countryside is denuded of nature and the natural functions of our ecosystems collapse, our [ability to manage](#) environmental hazards such flooding and drought is limited. If we lose nature from our lives, we limit not just the beauty of our world but its health and security too.

Nature can deliver thousands of [jobs](#), skills for the future, resilient [green infrastructure](#), and improved access for millions to better [health and wellbeing](#). Government has woken up to the economic benefits of investment in low carbon energy systems, and we support investment in energy efficiency and a renewable energy mix that includes nature friendly onshore and solar deployment in addition to well sited offshore wind. However, there is also an economic and societal necessity to invest in nature in order to meet our commitments and bolster the natural systems we all rely on. If we continue to prioritise [outdated infrastructure](#) such as fossil fuel industries, roads and aviation that undermine good progress elsewhere, we will be committing an unforgivable act of national self-harm, just at a time when the country needs to heal. As the [Dasgupta Review](#) has made clear, we can't afford another lost decade of targets missed and natural capital depletion, with the consequent risk to our economy.

The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) provides a timely opportunity to level up investment in our neglected national asset, and kick start a green recovery for people and nature. Governments across the UK have [missed their targets](#) for nature at national and global levels during the last decade.

Our countryside is a source of national pride, but we have allowed it to become one of the most nature depleted landscapes in the world, contributing to [global failure to meet targets](#) set at the UN ten years ago. A healthy natural world is the [bedrock](#) of human prosperity, so this failure has had immediate and serious consequences for our own economic prosperity, wellbeing, and security. Ongoing environmental degradation promises more of [the same](#). We also know that the destruction of nature is a [driver of pandemics](#) like the one we have been living through, and that nature can protect us from the impacts of [climate change](#). Any plan for ongoing national recovery that fails to account for these fundamental truths is fundamentally flawed.

Top 3 priorities for the CSR

Direct investment from government to achieve a “nature positive” future

While we support the Government’s approach to leveraging greater private sector finance to support environmental goals, there will still be a funding gap for vital public goods such as biodiversity, priority habitats, species recovery, and the foundational costs of establishing new, effective, market approaches which the Government must pay for. Specific funding will be required as follows:

1. Providing health and wellbeing benefits through access to nature: at-least an initial £5.5bn over a three-year period (£1.83bn p.a.)

This includes:

- An initial accelerator fund for the three-year spending period which will [provide](#) £200bn in healthcare benefits, an estimated 40,000 jobs, and provide 3,500 deprived neighbourhoods across the UK with access to greenspaces.

2. Restoring and protecting habitats and species to meet the target of halting the decline of nature by 2030: an additional £2.62bn p.a. is needed across the UK.

This includes:

- An additional £1.599bn per annum additional (UK-wide) for species recovery, priority habitats, hedgerows and other habitats to restore 270,729ha and expand 81,458ha of priority habitat UK-wide per year, including species-rich grasslands, peatland, woodland and saltmarsh.
- An additional £567m for the freshwater environments in England to meet Environment Bill commitments and to mitigate flooding.
- An additional £95.5m p.a. to restore and manage Marine Protected areas in UK waters, whilst enhancing vital and lost marine habitats such as seagrass.

3. Underpinning our environmental commitments through advice, enforcement, data and capacity-building to meet the target of halting the decline of nature by 2030: an additional £0.52bn p.a.

This includes:

- An additional £191m per annum for Natural England to carry out statutory duties.
- An additional £60 per annum for the Environment Agency to carry out its basic duties of advice and enforcement.
- A fund of £173m for farming and land management advice, training and support
- £43m per annum for Local Planning Authorities’ capacity building in advance of Biodiversity Gain.

- An additional £20.3m per annum for LNRS operational costs.
- An additional £6.7m per annum for National Parks and AONBs management and running costs to ensure they have the tools needed to deliver against the 25YEP, Leader's Pledge for Nature, Environment Bill goals and Net Zero.
- An additional £6m per annum funding for tackling biosecurity and invasive non-native species.
- A one-off fund of £4.5m for a National Nature Service pilot to secure long-term job creation in the nature sector.
- £500k per annum for an Animal Sentience Committee to oversee the delivery of the Animal Welfare Action Plan and subsequent Animal Sentience Bill.
- An additional £150k per annum to support the National Wildlife Crime Unit to carry out its duties in tackling wildlife crime.
- £50k per annum to support the International Whaling Commission in order to place the UK as a driving force for animal welfare globally.

Short term outcomes: Healthy, productive, and prosperous communities

Long term outcomes: Nature and climate benefits aligned to our UK priorities for nature

Green financing of wider government spending decisions

In addition to dedicated investment to achieve environmental improvement and restoration, achieving a nature positive economy requires a transformation in government decision making. Government needs to shift its approach and the criteria of its own spending in the following ways to support nature:

- Effective Green Book implementation across government to reflect the full value of biodiversity and natural capital in investment and policy choices.
- Strategic environmental screening of all future government spending and taxation policies to ensure that the UK's annual budgets and multi-year spending reviews support a net zero, nature positive transition (starting with application of a 'net zero test' to the 2021 Spending Review and Autumn Budget).
- Publication of the results of this analysis alongside fiscal/budget reports, together with a summary of how this information was used to inform fiscal policy decisions.
- A new green procurement policy to ensure the governments annual spend on goods and services sets the standard for the private sector.

Short term outcomes: Reduce the public sector impact on nature loss and set an economy wide standard for assessing nature-positive outcomes

Long term outcomes: Government intent to support long term economic shifts for nature

Expand private sector investment in nature

Private investment can help fill the funding gap but only if the government leads the way in developing new partnerships and blended financing approaches. To succeed the government must make the market for nature by:

- Properly financing the public bodies who will be required to oversee new markets
- Developing and enforcing effective market rules and standards
- Ensuring consistency and coherence between the new investment opportunities.
- Establishing the right criteria for new green bond issues and the UK Investment Bank (UKIB) to invest and leverage further funding into biodiversity and natural capital investments, creating significant numbers of new jobs.

Short term outcomes: We believe the possible scale of private funding raised for nature could be in the region of £760 million annually across the UK.

Long term outcomes: As markets establish and extend, for example biodiversity net gain in the marine environment, we believe private finance could meet half the scale of need to achieve the UKs environmental ambitions.

Direct investment, greening finance of wider Government decisions and expanding private sector investment in nature will further the levelling up agenda by **widening access to better health, securing the natural resources our economy depends on and delivering thousands of jobs.**

Link's full CSR 2021 submission, supported by over twenty nature organisations including Green Alliance and the RSPB, was submitted to the Treasury on 30.09.21 and can be found here:

www.wcl.org.uk/link-publications.asp

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