

Wildlife and Countryside Link 2019 General Election Manifesto

We face a triple environmental emergency: relentless decline in nature, dangerous climate change, and growing consequences of environmental inequality for mental and physical health.

[One in seven UK species](#) are at risk of extinction and [85% of us are concerned about climate change](#), up from 60% just six years ago. The environment is [top of young people's concerns](#).

Wildlife and Countryside Link is challenging all parties to improve our environment, our ability to engage with nature and to meet high standards of animal welfare. The manifesto proposals below are compatible with any Brexit outcome and can be pursued in or out of the European Union.

Face the climate crisis

1. Set bold goals for the 2020 climate negotiations in Glasgow (COP26) aiming for global agreement for (1) **all countries to commit to carbon neutrality, “net zero”**; and (2) to strengthen national commitments to limit warming to 1.5C, in line with the Paris ambition.
2. Implement a fully-funded, scientifically credible action plan to achieve **net zero emissions by 2045 at the very latest, without the use of international carbon offsetting**.
3. UK carbon accounts should be **“honest accounts”, including aviation and shipping emissions**, and legislating for corporate disclosure of the carbon intensity of supply chains in key commodities like cocoa, leather and soy.
4. The UK should use its COP presidency to **prioritise nature-based solutions** to climate change, encouraging all countries to include nature-based solutions in their Nationally Determined Contributions. Here, the Government should begin a nature-based climate solutions programme, focused on restoration of carbon-rich environments, including:
 - Expanding native tree and woodland cover, reaching **1.5 billion more trees by 2050 through planting and regenerative approaches**
 - **Restoring or creating 100,000 hectares of wetland by 2050**
 - **Banning burning of peatlands and peat extraction and restoring designated sites to good condition**
 - **Ending fossil fuel extraction including coal and phasing out existing production**
 - **Achieving net zero emissions from farming by 2040 at the latest**



Recover, preserve and enhance nature

5. In Westminster, introduce a new **Environment Act with legally binding targets for air, water, wildlife, waste and access to nature**, with the objective of achieving world-leading standards of environmental improvement. These should be backed up by a fully independent and properly-resourced watchdog with legal bite, comprehensive reporting, and strong legal remedies in all areas of environmental law, including climate change. Key targets should include:
 - reducing PM2.5 air pollution to World Health Organisation limits;
 - achieving good environmental status for inland waters and in our seas;
 - tripling resource productivity; and
 - “bending the curve” in the loss of wildlife by 2030.
6. At the 2020 Convention on Biological Diversity in China, the UK should **champion global ambition to reverse wildlife and ecosystem decline**, aiming to agree an overarching goal to reverse nature’s decline by 2030, underpinned by strong, measurable targets.
7. Introduce a strong **Agriculture Bill** for England with a requirement for a new system of public payments for public goods (not just a power), including environmental improvement, animal welfare and public access. This should make multi-year funding commitments, based on an independent assessment of the scale of financial need to restore nature, enhance public access and raise standards of animal welfare. To achieve these aims, the **Government should commit at least £3 billion annual funding for the first ten years**.
8. **Revise and reinforce the Biodiversity Duty** so public bodies and companies can be held to account for protecting and restoring threatened species and habitats. Reverse budget cuts in Natural England and the Environment Agency and increase resourcing to maximise public benefits of better environmental regulation and enforcement.
9. Commit to non-regression in regulatory standards and **introduce a “green tape challenge”** to ensure that any change or reduction in regulation is beneficial to the environment or animal welfare. Guarantee that any future trade deals (in or out of the EU) should require stronger animal welfare and environmental protections.
10. Set a radical UK Marine Strategy to restore our ocean that includes ambitious, time bound targets to reduce threats and improve the resilience of our sea. This should include:
 - **Fisheries legislation with binding commitments for sustainable fishing levels, reform of quota distribution, mandatory onboard monitoring and enforcement.**
 - Stronger management and enforcement in Marine Protected Areas in England.
 - Action to end the huge number of accidental deaths of marine species in fishing gear.
 - A moratorium on UK-sponsored deep sea mining exploration.
 - Maintaining the moratorium on commercial whaling, taking a leading role in the International Whaling Commission and implementing an ambitious strategy for the protection of whales, dolphins, and porpoises mammals across the UK



11. **Introduce a closed season for hare shooting** to protect hares during the breeding season, and bring England and Wales in line with Scotland and the rest of Europe.
12. Recognise animal sentience in law, alongside a duty to have regard for their welfare needs in policy making and implementation. **Sentience legislation should cover all sentient animals, including lobsters, crabs, squid and octopuses.** An Animal Welfare Committee should provide independent and transparent advice to all Government departments, including through animal welfare impact appraisal and ethical review.
13. To lead the world in tackling wildlife crime and preventing extinction, **extend the ivory-ban to other vulnerable species including hippos and narwhals.** The National Wildlife Crime Unit should be guaranteed funding and all wildlife crimes should be recorded, with annual reporting and analysis providing transparency around crime levels and hotspots.
14. **End the badger cull** and refocus efforts to tackle bovine tuberculosis on improved cattle control measures, such as better biosecurity and risk-based trading, and investment in non-lethal wildlife interventions including a large-scale trial of badger vaccination.

Improving people's environment and access to it

15. Legislate in the Environment Bill for **new Local Nature Recovery Plans in England**, restoring and connecting wild, green places that matter most for people and wildlife. These plans should be spatial and be supported by statutory duties to ensure they are fully taken into account in planning and spending decisions.
16. Implement proposals made in the Landscape Review calling for **all children to spend a night under the stars in a National Park or AONB.**
17. Reform Building Regulations in England to **require all new homes and commercial buildings to be built to zero-carbon standards**, with tighter standards for water efficiency (including a mandatory water-efficiency labelling scheme for fittings), introduce statutory standards for sustainable drainage in England, and increase provision for nature and green / blue open spaces.
18. **Introduce a green infrastructure National Policy Statement** and a national policy commitment that all major infrastructure should achieve net environmental gain.
19. **Reduce resource use: make producers pay for the full life costs of packaging and waste across all viable waste streams**, introducing an "all in" Deposit Return Scheme in England, and setting up a multi-disciplinary microplastics commission, with the power to investigate and tackle health and environmental consequences of microplastic pollution.
20. Introduce a cross-Departmental **chemicals reduction strategy that ensures safe disposal of existing hazardous chemicals introduces a new polluter pays levies to reduce harmful chemicals use**, and improves the monitoring, reporting and inspection of chemicals handling, transportation and application across the economy.
21. Ensure that prior to approval for use all new pesticides are subjected to safety tests that provide **protection for bees and other pollinators**, from acute and long-term harm.
22. Ensure that people's environmental concerns are reflected in national governance by moving beyond GDP. Each year, **a Natural Prosperity Statement should be delivered alongside the Budget**, with time allotted for Parliament to debate environmental improvement.

We recommend that all parties commit to improving our environment, increasing our access to nature and enhancing animal welfare by adopting these proposals in full.

The following Link member organisations have contributed to this document:

