

EAC Inquiry Biodiversity and Ecosystems – Government Evidence

This response has been compiled by the UK government and devolved administrations who have contributed to questions 1-3, which specifically reference action across the four nations, further details can be found in Annex 1. The remaining questions largely refer to reserved matters or specific policies in England and are answered from this perspective.

The Committee’s terms of reference are wide ranging. The UK Government has provided a detailed response to each question. However, as this takes the response over the 3000 words, we offer a summary of the response on pages 5-14.

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Preamble. The UK's ambition and action for biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth – the variety of ecosystems and species, and the genetic diversity within them¹.

Biodiversity matters. People value biodiversity intrinsically² but the components of biodiversity – our species, the genetic diversity within them, the ecosystems of which they are part, and the functions and services they provide - underpin our wellbeing and economic prosperity.

Biodiversity is declining worldwide, with the decline projected to continue or worsen². *Many components of biodiversity in the UK show decline*³. Despite some conservation successes in recent years some of our most important habitats are in poor condition and many species groups are in long-term falls.

Domestic biodiversity policy is devolved in the UK. The UK is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and each of the four nations produces their own plans or strategies to support implementation, collaborating and sharing best practice through the UK Biodiversity Framework.

In England, the 25 Year Environment Plan marked a step-change in ambition for wildlife and the natural environment on land and at sea⁴. Government is already taking action to fulfil this ambition for example by bringing forward the first Environment Bill in over 20 years, investing in woodland expansion and peatland restoration and developing a new Environmental Land Management scheme that will reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmental public goods. To protect our seas we have recently completed building a comprehensive network of Marine Protected Areas, which now protects 40% of English waters. The current strategy *Biodiversity 2020* has been evaluated⁶ and the government is developing a new strategy for nature in England, to implement the 25 Year Environment Plan commitments and take forward international goals and targets.

The Scottish Government has stated that conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is a key priority, which is reflected in its Programme for Government, and is committed to doing more to protect and enhance Scotland's species and habitats. These ambitions are set out in the *Scottish Biodiversity Strategy* and its supplement, the *2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity*. A wide range of work across public,

¹ The Convention on Biological Diversity defines biodiversity as the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystem

² England Biodiversity Indicators. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/england-biodiversityindicators>

² IPBES llobal Assessment. <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>

³ UK Biodiversity Indicators <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/biodiversity-indicators-for-the-uk>

⁴ 25 Year Environment Plan <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

⁶ [Biodiversity 2020 Evaluation](#)

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private and third sectors is undertaken to deliver the Strategy's outcomes. Monitoring of these activities is undertaken by various Scottish environment agencies.

The Welsh Government has introduced far reaching legislation to ensure that action for biodiversity and ecosystems is integrated across the public sector in Wales, through The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and The

Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Wales's priorities for natural resources and biodiversity are set out in the Natural Resources Policy, and The Nature Recovery Action Plan outlines actions to maintain and enhance biodiversity in line with goals and targets set out in the Convention on Biological Diversity's global strategy to 2020.

In Northern Ireland, nature conservation and the issues affecting biodiversity are seen as key challenges, especially in the context of climate change. The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy sets out the main issues and objectives to address the overall target of halting the loss of biodiversity.

Internationally, the UK is committed to playing a leading role in developing an ambitious and transformative post-2020 framework for biodiversity under the Convention on Biological Diversity (replacing the 20 'Aichi' Targets, which expire in 2020).

Further detail on monitoring, reporting and action for biodiversity in the four nations can be found in Annex 1.

SUMMARY OF OUR RESPONSE

- **The state of biodiversity**

1. *How effectively is the Government monitoring the impact of UK activities on biodiversity, at home and abroad?*

The UK has extensive monitoring and surveillance in place which allows government to track the status and trends of key components of biological diversity – including sites, habitats and species, as well as the impacts of key activities such as site protection. Much of this data is summarised in UK and country biodiversity indicators which chart progress with international and domestic commitments.

UK marine monitoring covers biodiversity and key pressures affecting biodiversity, allowing us to assess progress towards our aim of Good Environmental Status for UK seas, as set out in the updated UK Marine Strategy Part One assessment (2019). We are currently consulting stakeholders on our proposed updated monitoring programmes⁵ and will finalise the UK Marine Strategy Part Two, which sets out these programmes, with reference to the stakeholder comments received, after the consultation closes in November.

Despite this wealth of data, gaps remain, for example on the status of habitats outside protected sites or on seabirds. The UK government and the Devolved Administrations are developing their monitoring programmes to address these gaps, for example by investing in new technology to map and assess ecosystems and by working in partnership with volunteer societies to improve the way species data are collected and shared.

Internationally, monitoring is in place for major funding streams. For example, the UK's International Climate Finance programmes record the activities and effects of the intervention against a range of indicators allowing government to track and compare impacts across multiple programmes.⁶

2. *How has the Government performed against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and what further progress is needed?*

The UK's performance against the global 'Aichi' Biodiversity targets was set out in the 6th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which drew on the UK indicators and wider monitoring data⁷. Of 20 targets: 5 were assessed as "on track to achieve the target"; 14 were assessed as "progressing towards target but at an insufficient rate"; and one relating to indigenous people was not assessed.

The Report highlights several areas where further progress is required including on improving wildlife-rich habitats inside and outside protected sites; addressing invasive species which continue to increase in prevalence across the UK; and action on funding for biodiversity and ecosystems in the UK.

⁵ UK Marine Strategy Part Two consultation (2020) https://consult.defra.gov.uk/marine/updated-uk-marinestrategy-part-two-marine-monitor/supporting_documents/marinestrategyparttwoconsultationdocument.pdf

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/international-climate-finance#our-results>

⁷ <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/united-kingdom-s-6th-national-report-to-the-convention-on-biologicaldiversity/>

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3. *Where should the four nations prioritise resources to tackle biodiversity loss?*

Government's immediate priority is to ensure that high-quality green jobs are created to support a clean and resilient recovery to the coronavirus pandemic. Beyond this, the four nations are pursuing a balanced approach across three priorities to secure investment and action over the long-term:

- Safeguarding our richest sites and habitats in the terrestrial, freshwater and marine environment.
- Restoring ecosystems and investing in nature-based solutions to tackle the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change,
- Taking action to address the multiple pressures that impact on biodiversity

Domestic biodiversity policy is devolved in the UK and each of the four countries produces their own plans or strategies to support international commitments, although action in the marine environment is coordinated through the UK Marine Strategy.

In England, we are ramping up our ambitious legislative agenda through our landmark Environment, Fisheries and Agriculture Bills and investing in nature-based solutions for climate mitigation.

Scotland's ambitions are set out in the *Scottish Biodiversity Strategy* and its supplement, the *2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity*. A wide range of work across public, private and third sectors is undertaken to deliver the Strategy's outcomes.

The Welsh Government has introduced far reaching legislation to ensure that action for biodiversity and ecosystems is integrated across the public sector in Wales, through The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and The Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Wales's priorities for natural resources and biodiversity are set out in the Natural Resources Policy.

In Northern Ireland, priorities include the development of plans and strategies to manage and restore Special Areas of Conservation including peatland where necessary, a new afforestation programme; and in the marine environment, the introduction of fisheries management measures, and the use of nature-based solutions to support coastal flood protection.

Evaluating measures to conserve and enhance biodiversity

4. *How should the Environmental Land Management scheme maintain and improve biodiversity? What role might alternative land use play in delivering improvements to biodiversity under the ELM scheme?*

Agri-environment schemes have provided the principal source of funding for the management of protected sites and for the restoration of wildlife-rich habitats on

land. In the evaluation of Biodiversity 2020, agri-environment schemes were identified as the most important mechanism for delivering biodiversity outcomes⁸.

The new Environmental Land Management scheme will be the cornerstone of future agricultural policy in England. Founded on the principle of 'public money for public goods'. Environment Land Management will contribute to biodiversity improvements by paying for measures such as habitat creation, restoration and management and specific species management actions. Government is also exploring how the scheme might deliver the transformational land use change that is needed to meet ambitious net zero and climate change adaptation commitments.

5. How effective are the new measures to enhance biodiversity within the Environment Bill, particularly biodiversity net gain and Nature Recovery Networks? Do these measures complement existing regulatory frameworks and address issues surrounding how to value nature?

The Environment Bill sets a new and ambitious domestic framework for environmental governance as we maximise the opportunities created by leaving the European Union. It will drive the long-term action nature needs to recover, including powers to set legally-binding targets (on air quality, water, biodiversity, and resource efficiency and waste reduction), establish the Office for Environmental Protection and placing environmental principles in law for the first time.

The nature measures established through the Environment Bill lay the foundation for the Nature Recovery Network in England. In addition to setting the framework for at least one legally binding target for biodiversity, they establish spatial mapping and planning tools to help inform nature recovery and new duties and incentives to drive change on the ground that will sit alongside our plans for a new Environmental Land Management Scheme. They supplement and reinforce existing legislation and policy on protected sites and species.

We expect biodiversity net gain, in combination with Local Nature Recovery Strategies, to result in creation and the avoidance of loss of between 14,410 to 17,060 hectares of habitat for wildlife each year, delivering annual natural capital benefits of almost £1.4 billion⁹.

6. How should Nature Recovery Networks be planned, funded and delivered?

Our approach to implementing the Nature Recovery Network is to provide a spatial framework to plan nature recovery through Local Nature Recovery Strategies, develop partnerships to work together to plan and coordinate action and to integrate the Network's objectives into existing and planned funding streams to incentivise those actions.

⁸ Defra [science search](#)

⁹ Defra 2019, Biodiversity net gain and local nature recovery strategies impact assessment. Available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839610/net-gain-ia.pdf

To provide additional funding for the Network, the government announced up to £25 million for a Nature Recovery Fund, of which £10 million has been brought forwards under the Green Recovery Challenge Fund so that money can be spent now while it is most needed as part of the Covid-19 recovery.

7. How effective are other policies for conservation and enhancement of existing natural habitats, such as the Woodland Grant Schemes?

There are several additional policies that protect and enhance natural habitats. Woodland management in England is supported through Countryside Stewardship. This addresses threats to biodiversity posed by under-management¹⁰ and supports woodland creation. At 31 March 2020, 59 out of every 100 hectares of English woodland were actively managed, totalling 772,000 hectares in management.¹³

In July 2017, Defra launched a £10 million grant scheme for peatland restoration in England over three years. This is supporting four large-scale restoration projects across 62 sites in England. These projects are in their final year and are on track to deliver 5,948 ha of peat restoration.

On marine litter, we have taken action to prevent and divert material from impacting on marine biodiversity for example, through our world-leading ban on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products.

Co-ordination of UK environmental policy

8. How can policy be better integrated to address biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development?

¹⁰ [State of Nature Report 2016 - RSPB see page 13](#)

¹³ [Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators 2019-20 see page 17](#)

A natural capital approach, which values and accounts for our ecosystems and other components of our natural capital, is at the heart of our plans for better integration across environmental and economic policies.

In England, the natural capital approach is integrated into the way that government undertakes policy appraisal, through the Green Book, the way it is developing spatial planning and the way it is developing targets and indicators for nature and the wider environment. Clearer spatial planning for nature, for example through Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Marine Planning, allows for management of trade-offs and targeted action to deliver a range of co-benefits for wildlife, for climate mitigation and for people. Defra is also working closely with other Government Departments and the Crown Estate to enable ambitious offshore wind growth while sustaining no net loss of marine biodiversity.

9. How can biodiversity and ecosystems help achieve the air, soil and water quality objectives in the 25 Year Environment Plan?

Components of biodiversity such as ecological communities and species are key elements of natural capital, and it is through the functioning of ecosystems and their constituent species that we derive many of the services that bring value to people. Healthy functioning ecosystems in the soil, on land, in freshwater and in the marine environment support our objectives for air, water and soil health as well as supporting rich wildlife.

A greater understanding of the values provided by ecosystems and their component species is essential if we are to manage our land, freshwater, coastal and marine environment so that they continue to provide the services we rely on. That is why, in England, we committed in the 25 Year Environment Plan to developing natural capital accounts and understanding of the benefits of natural capital through research.

That is also why we are taking significant new action to recover nature and restore ecosystems. Government is investing in woodland expansion, peatland restoration and natural flood management as contributions to tackling biodiversity loss, flooding and climate change. In March 2020, we announced a £640 million Nature for Climate Fund, which will support a significant increase in afforestation across England and help to restore 35,000ha of peatland over the next 5 years.

10. How well is the UK addressing biodiversity loss in its Overseas Territories and in international development partnerships with other countries?

The UK Overseas Territories (UKOT) are biodiversity hotspots and the government remains committed to supporting them, as set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan and our Overseas Territories White Paper.

The government's response to the recent call for evidence on 'Safeguarding the environment in British Overseas Territories' has ensured funding currently made available through the Darwin Plus programme is uplifted to £10 million per annum from 2021/2022 until the end of this Parliament. This is in addition to funding available through the Blue Belt Programme, which has supported the delivery of the commitment to enhance marine protection for over 4 million square kilometres of marine environment across the UKOTs since 2016.

The UK is working together to deliver solutions with international development partners that are good for people, nature and the climate. For example, from 2016 – 21, we committed 18% of bilateral International Climate Finance (over \$1bn), to programmes that support nature-based solutions. The UK’s main dedicated contribution to tackling biodiversity loss is through our funding of the Global Environment Facility which totals £250 million between 2018 and 2022. The Global Environment Facility provides grants and other support to developing countries for projects and programmes to address global environmental problems. Since its inception in 1991 it has managed more than 3,300 protected areas covering 860 million hectares (an area larger than Brazil); 1,010 climate change mitigation projects contributing to 2.7 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emission reductions; and sustainable management of 34 of the world’s major river basins.

11. What outcomes and protections should the UK Government be pushing for at the forthcoming UN negotiations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15?

The UK’s objective for COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity is to agree a new framework that spurs action and the transformative changes needed for halting and reversing global biodiversity loss. We will support and push for ambitious and practical targets, strengthened by coherent implementation mechanisms that are commensurate with the scale of the challenge. For example, the UK is leading the Global Ocean Alliance of countries in support of a new global Convention on Biological Diversity target of protecting at least 30% of the global ocean within Marine Protected Areas by 2030. This “30by30” target would represent a trebling of the current CBD 10% marine protection target for 2020.

It is important that new targets are evidence-based, measurable and have adequate monitoring criteria in place to ensure action is taken to meet the targets agreed. Resource mobilisation will be a critical component. The UK will support a package of measures that draws on Parties’ experience of implementing the current Strategy for Resource Mobilisation.

Economics of Biodiversity

12. What are the possible approaches to balancing economic growth and conservation of nature and its contributions? Is there evidence these approaches work and can be implemented?

Under the CBD, the UK is committed to mainstreaming or integrating biodiversity into decision making in sectors such as planning, production and consumption and wider business activity.

The planning system exists to balance social, economic and environmental needs through sustainable development. Reforms set out in the recent Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government publication, *Planning for the Future*, will leave an inheritance of environmental improvement for England – with environmental assets protected, more green spaces provided, more sustainable development supported, new homes that are much more energy efficient and new places that can become the heritage of the future, built closer to where people want to live and work to reduce our reliance on carbon-intensive modes of transport.

Later this autumn we will be launching a new consultation on a reformed framework of environmental assessment and mitigation in the planning system based on a series of new principles, roles and responsibilities. Our goal is to improve upon the current system, without reducing existing protections. We will credibly and demonstrably set out how we can support delivery of Net Zero, help to mitigate and adapt to climate change, recover nature and reverse declines in protected species and habitats and achieve compliance with our international obligations.

The government's Resources and Waste Strategy¹¹, published in December 2018, is framed by natural capital thinking and guided by two overarching objectives: to maximise the value of resource use and to minimise waste and its impact on the environment. Its aim is to move away from a linear 'take, make, use and throw' approach to resources, to a circular approach. A more circular, resource efficient model will reduce the impacts on our environment from extraction, processing, manufacture and disposal. The International Resources Panel report estimates the extraction and processing of materials, fuels and food make up about half of total global greenhouse gas emissions and more than 90 per cent of biodiversity loss and water stress¹².

Government is working with partners to explore how to improve the decision-making processes of financial institutions and the companies they invest in, so they take account of their dependencies and impacts on nature.

13. What does the UK Government need to do to maximise human prosperity – in terms of health, economic, and social wellbeing—within the ecological and

resource constraints of a finite planet? What alternative models and measures of economic welfare can feasibly help achieve this?

A natural capital approach, where we understand the value and inter-relationships of our ecosystems and other components of our natural capital, will help us to account for the range of economic, social and environmental impacts of our decisions. That is why in 2017, in the UK Government's Industrial Strategy, we committed to working across the UK to preserve and enhance natural capital.

We are seeking to incorporate natural capital and the value of the benefits it provides into analysis and appraisal across government, and to provide the data and tools to support those decisions. In 2018, HM Treasury's 'Green Book' guidance was revised to ensure that government Departments consider implications of any policy, programme or project on natural capital and the benefits they provide to individuals, communities and businesses¹³. The government has developed national natural capital accounts - the next publication of which will include initial marine and coastal

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/resources-and-waste-strategy-for-england>

¹² International Resource Panel, Global Resources Outlook 2019

¹³ [HMT Green Book](#)

accounts for the first time. This work is led by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in partnership with Defra.

In 2019 Scotland published country-level Natural Capital Accounts (2019), providing an estimate of the monetary value of the ecosystems.

In Northern Ireland, DAERA is undertaking an exercise to determine the overall natural capital of Northern Ireland's environment and to use this baseline information to determine trends and assist in strategic decision making.

In March 2019, HM Treasury commissioned an independent, global Review on the Economics of Biodiversity led by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta. The review sets out to assess the economic benefits of biodiversity globally, assess the economic costs and risks of biodiversity loss, and identify a range of actions that can simultaneously enhance biodiversity and deliver economic prosperity. The government looks forward to receiving the final report later this year and will respond publicly in due course.

Pairing nature-based solutions to climate change with biodiversity

14. Which nature-based solutions are most effective in achieving both climate and biodiversity goals?

Nature-based solutions and wider natural climate solutions such as biomass planting¹⁴ have the potential to cost-effectively deliver up to one third of *global* climate mitigation required by 2030 to hold warming below 2°C, while also providing adaptation and resilience benefits.¹⁵

Nature-based solutions can also play a key role domestically, alongside ambitious action and mitigation in other sectors. Peatlands are unique habitats and the UK's largest terrestrial carbon store. Reducing these emissions by restoring can turn

¹⁴ Defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits

¹⁵ Griscom et al (2017) <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/114/44/11645.full.pdf>

peatlands back into a long-term net greenhouse gas sink. Tree planting is another key contributor to nature-based carbon sequestration: the UK's woodlands currently sequester the equivalent of 18MT CO₂ per annum – about 4% of the UK's gross emissions.

Governments across the UK are fully seized on the potential of nature-based solutions to address both climate and biodiversity goals and new funding has been introduced across the UK (see main section and annex 1).

15. What would constitute clear indicators of progress and cost-effectiveness of nature-based solutions and how should trade-offs and co-benefits associated with nature-based solutions, biodiversity and socioeconomic outcomes be considered?

Developing indicators for nature-based solutions is challenging due to the inherent complexity of ecosystem function and because our knowledge of how to value the full range of benefits from nature-based solutions is incomplete.

To date the UK Government has not developed indicators for nature-based solutions specifically. The Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry sector of the greenhouse gas emission inventory, records emissions and removals from these sectors, including forestry, although this only quantifies the climate change mitigation benefits. The Climate Change Committee is developing a set of climate change adaptation indicators¹⁶.

16. How can funding be mobilised to support effective nature-based solutions to climate change? How can the private sector be encouraged to contribute to funding?

Internationally, mobilising support for nature-based solutions is at the heart of the UK's ambition as president of the 26th Conference of the Parties to the UK

Framework Convention on Climate Change. Nature-based solutions are underfunded, with less than 4 percent of public financing going to nature¹⁷.

As part of the COP26 Nature Campaign, the UK will be driving global action on sustainable land use and commodities trade, sustainable agriculture, and sustainable finance for nature. The UK is demonstrating its commitment by increasing its International Climate Finance to at least £11.6 billion over 5 years from 2020 to 2025 and will establish a £500 million Blue Planet Fund.

Domestically, the government is also introducing measures to mobilise private sector funding. The Environment Bill will set long-term, legally binding targets. Introducing a robust target-setting framework sends a clear signal to investors, providing the much-needed long-term certainty to support planning, innovation and investment. The government has also signalled that in 2021 we will establish a Natural

¹⁶ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/progress-in-preparing-for-climate-change-2019-progressreport-to-parliament/>

¹⁷ <https://www.climatepolicyinitiative.org/publication/global-landscape-of-climate-finance-2019/>

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Environment Investment Readiness Fund in England; a three-year, £10 million capability and capacity-building grant programme.

Summary: 3518 words including sub-titles

FURTHER INFORMATION

The state of biodiversity

1. How effectively is the Government monitoring the impact of UK activities on biodiversity, at home and abroad?

The UK has extensive monitoring and surveillance in place to track the status and trends of key components of biological diversity at home, on land and at sea, including sites, habitats and species, with much of the latter collected by expert volunteers.

These monitoring data are compiled in our UK biodiversity indicators which chart progress towards the goals set out in the Aichi Targets under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. The UK indicators are overseen by government statisticians in

Defra and are subject to review by the UK Statistics Authority¹⁸ and the Office for Statistics Regulation and form a major part of the evidence base for UK reports on progress to the Convention on Biological Diversity¹⁹ (see question 2).

Domestic biodiversity policy is devolved in the UK and each of the countries has developed its own approach to monitoring for biodiversity at home. Marine policy is the main exception to this, as in order to address transboundary issues, marine monitoring and assessment is coordinated at UK level. In addition, Joint Nature Conservation Committee manage much of our species data at Great Britain or UK scale, simply because most of the volunteer bodies with whom they partner operate at this scale.

Despite extensive and long-term data covering the status, pressures and benefits from biodiversity as well as the extent of actions that address biodiversity loss, there remain gaps, for example for habitats outside protected sites, and each country is acting to address them.

UK marine monitoring

UK marine monitoring²⁰ covers biodiversity and key pressures affecting biodiversity, allowing us to assess progress towards our aim of Good Environmental Status for UK seas, as set out in the updated UK Marine Strategy Part One assessment (2019). We are currently consulting stakeholders on our proposed updated monitoring programmes and will finalise the UK Marine Strategy Part Two: Marine Monitoring Programmes after the consultation period, taking into account the stakeholder comments received.

The UK is a world leader in ocean and climate science and research and features prominently in assessments of international excellence. We also provide strong leadership in international marine science programmes, and bodies such as The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea and OSPAR. However, designing and implementing monitoring programmes that effectively assess the complex interactions affecting marine biodiversity is a huge challenge, so we remain committed to investing in ongoing research and development that will bring further understanding and innovation.

Within marine environments there are some gaps in our understanding of biodiversity distribution and abundance and the pressures affecting them, such as for seabird populations. We are seeking to fill our gaps in understanding of seabird distribution and abundance over the UK sea area through a pilot monitoring programme. Data collected during the pilot will inform future monitoring and protection measures. We are developing proposals for an ambitious target on Marine Protected Areas condition through the Environment Bill and will be developing a comprehensive assessment and monitoring strategy to assess progress.

¹⁸ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

¹⁹ <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

²⁰ UK Marine Strategy Part Two (2014) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-strategy-parttwo-uk-marine-monitoring-programmes>

Further information on country level monitoring and reporting for England, Wales Scotland and Northern Ireland are given in Annex 1.

Internationally, the UK has put in place appropriate monitoring and evaluation programmes tailored to evaluate the impact of our varied international projects. The UK's International Climate Finance programmes use Logical Frameworks to record the activities and effects of the intervention against a range of indicators, including at least one of 10 cross-portfolio Key Performance Indicators, which allow us to track and compare impacts across multiple programmes. The aggregated results of International Climate Finance on certain indicators are published annually²¹: International Climate Finance: Our Results). International Climate Finance also runs a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Programme²², which undertakes significant portfolio-level evaluations and supports monitoring with development of new tools and indicators

UK-funded projects to tackle the illegal wildlife trade (£5-6 million a year) make use of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks and include oversight from cross-government project boards where appropriate. Projects funded by the flagship International Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund submit annual reports which are assessed by independent specialists. Mid Term Reviews are carried out on a sample of ongoing projects each year, involving document review, interviews, field visits and focus groups with project beneficiaries. These reviews follow the The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development evaluation criteria for evaluating development assistance.

Planned funds, such as the £220 million International Biodiversity Fund, which includes a new and ambitious £100 million Biodiverse Landscapes Fund, will be monitored at both fund and landscape levels to scrutinise the effectiveness of interventions to meet objectives.

There is considerable scope for improving our monitoring of international biodiversity work. For example, given the resource-intensive nature of measuring biodiversity, especially in the data-poor environments such as those in which International Climate Finance works, many programmes use a limited number of proxy indicators available to assess ecosystem health and management and hence biodiversity. The development and international agreement of the indicators for the Convention on Biological Diversity post-2020 global biodiversity framework will provide further opportunities for consistent global monitoring.

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/international-climate-finance#our-results>

²² <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-COH-02651349-10725>

2. How has the Government performed against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and what further progress is needed?

The UK's performance against the Aichi Biodiversity targets was set out in the 16th National Report to the CBD²³. Of the 20 targets:

- 5 were assessed as “on track to achieve the target”;
- 14 were assessed as “progressing towards target but at an insufficient rate”;
- 1 was not assessed as the target is not relevant to the UK (related to indigenous peoples and local communities).

The assessments were made by Joint Nature Conversation Committee on behalf of Defra and the Devolved Administrations, combining data from government, statutory nature conservation bodies, and the wider stakeholder community.

Targets that are on track include: integration of biodiversity into planning, development national accounting; extent of protected areas; and, increasing scientific base and knowledge transfer related to biodiversity.

Targets that are progressing but at an insufficient rate include: rate of loss, degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats; conservation of threatened species; and tackling invasive species.

The report also highlights several areas where further progress is required:

- A significant proportion of our best wildlife habitats inside and outside protected sites remains in unfavourable condition or status.
- There are increasing pressures on biodiversity. For example, the prevalence of invasive species continues to increase across the UK.
- There has been a short-term fall in funding for biodiversity in the UK, although as biodiversity has increasingly been integrated into other funding streams such as green growth, ‘biodiversity funding’ has become increasingly difficult to identify.

For species, the overall picture is of ongoing decline, although perhaps not at the rate seen in previous decades. More species have decreased in distribution (27%) than increased (21%) since 1970²⁴. However, there are some species or species groups where there has been progress. A key finding of the report is that often these areas of progress for species are the product of targeted partnerships where conservation NGOs, farmers, landowners, scientists and Government work together and are generally due to landscape scale interventions. Defra is the lead department for the Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15, Life below water and life on land. The UK's voluntary national review of progress with these goals was published in 2019. The Sustainable Development Goals are similar in scope to the Aichi targets and draw on similar data²⁸. Further information on the progress made towards the biodiversity targets by each of the four countries is given in Annex 1.

²³ <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/united-kingdom-s-6th-national-report-to-the-convention-on-biological-diversity/>

²⁴ State of Nature 2019. <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/publications/state-of-nature-2019-report-uk.pdf>

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-voluntary-national-review-of-the-sustainable-developmentgoals>

3. Where should the four nations prioritise resources to tackle biodiversity loss?

Government's immediate priority is to ensure that high-quality green jobs are created to support a clean and resilient recovery to the coronavirus pandemic but global challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss have not gone away.

Biodiversity is in long term decline in the UK. It was the National Ecosystem Assessment that perhaps first highlighted at a national scale why this is important. People value biodiversity intrinsically²⁹, but the components of biodiversity – our species, the genetic diversity within them, the ecosystems of which they are part, and the functions and services they provide - underpin our wellbeing and economic prosperity. For example, peatlands occupy around 12% of UK land but net benefits, in terms of climate change emissions alone, of restoring 55% of peatlands to near natural condition are estimated to have a present value of approximately £45-£51 billion³⁰.

Our biodiversity indicators give an insight into why decline continues. Declines in biodiversity are not new, and in many respects reflect historical land use changes, but there have been substantial declines in the area of natural and semi-natural habitat in the last 50 years, and many pressures, for example from invasive species, are increasing, or reducing only very slowly.

That is why an integrated and balanced approach across the four nations is so important, prioritising three areas:

- *Safeguarding our richest sites and habitats across the terrestrial, freshwater and marine environment.*
- *Restoring ecosystems and investing in nature-based solutions* to tackle the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change
- *Taking action to address the multiple pressures* that impact on biodiversity.

It is clear also that some species are threatened despite their habitats being secure. The four countries are each therefore also taking targeted and specific action for our most threatened species, including seabirds and pollinators, working with wide partnerships to direct funding to species recovery and re-introductions.

Government also has an immediate priority to ensure that high-quality green jobs are created to support a clean and resilient recovery to the coronavirus pandemic, for the benefit of both the environment and the economy. For example, Defra has been working with other Departments across Whitehall at pace to develop a package of measures which will help restart the economy following Covid-19, whilst benefitting the environment²⁵. The Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2020 will announce Green Jobs as part of its Green Recovery, investing and taking actions to

²⁵ In England, we have brought forward through a new £40 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund, designed to kick start a programme of nature-based projects. The fund will help conservation organisations and their suppliers create up to 3,000 jobs and safeguard up to 2,000 others across England, in themes such as protecting species, finding nature-based solutions to tackling climate change and connecting people with the outdoors.

²⁹ England Biodiversity Indicators. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/england-biodiversityindicators>

³⁰ UK Natural Capital: Peatlands. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/bulletins/uknaturalcapitalforpeatlands/naturalcapitalaccounts>

boost youth employment opportunities; and targeting future skills and capacity requirements in nature and land-based jobs. This will include working with Scottish Forestry and Forestry and Land Scotland to double their existing commitments to provide opportunities for young people, and working to develop a Green Workforce and Skills Development Package - with an initial skills gap analysis undertaken by NatureScot.

Government is also ramping up our world-leading work on our ambitious legislative agenda in England through our landmark Environment, Fisheries and Agriculture Bills. The Environment Bill sets a new and ambitious domestic framework for environmental governance as we maximise the opportunities created by leaving the European Union. It will drive the long-term action nature needs to recover, including powers to set legally-binding targets (on air quality, water, biodiversity, and resource efficiency and waste reduction), establish the Office for Environmental Protection and placing environmental principles in law for the first time.

This legal underpinning will sit alongside investment. We are investing in woodland expansion and peatland restoration as a contribution to tackling biodiversity loss and climate change. We have announced new funding²⁶ for nature through our Nature Recovery, Nature for Climate and Natural Environment Impact Funds, supporting our ambition to create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat. We are developing a new Environmental Land Management scheme that will reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmental public goods.

In the marine environment, for example, Defra has recently been awarded £4.33m by HMT to develop shared processes and mechanisms with The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to streamline consenting for offshore wind farms and fully realise the economic benefits and net-zero contribution of the Sector Deal on Offshore Wind.

In Scotland, actions to address biodiversity issues include the creation of a Scottish Biodiversity Programme to oversee all activity on biodiversity, the details of which are set out in the appended Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee letter (Annex 2).

In Wales work to deliver the priorities is set out in our Natural Resources Policy and Nature Recovery Action Plans, including through Natural Resources Wales's area statements.

The Natural Resources Policy priorities are:

- Delivering nature-based solutions

²⁶ £25m Nature Recovery Fund; £640 million Nature for Climate Fund; £10 million Natural Environment Impact Fund; Tripling Darwin Plus (UK OTs) to £10m/yr. Budget 2020, March: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/budget-2020-documents/budget-2020>

- Improving resources efficiency and increasing renewable energy -
Taking a place-based approach.

The Nature Recovery Action Plans highlights the need to maintain and enhance resilient ecological networks, with protected sites at their core, as the key naturebased solution to tackle both biodiversity loss and climate change.

In Northern Ireland, DAERA has embarked on a programme which will see the development of Conservation Management Plans for 54 of Northern Ireland's Special Areas of Conservation. Development of these Plans has commenced and they are currently at various stages: 10 habitat maps have been produced thus far and 27 pressure and threats assessments undertaken with ongoing stakeholder engagement. The aim is for 25 draft Conservation Management Plans to be completed by 31st March 2021.

The development of a NI Peatland Strategy has been proposed which will look at ways to protect and restore vulnerable peatland habitats.

In March 2020 the DAERA Minister announced a new Programme of Afforestation, 'Forests for Our Future' which will plant 9,000 hectares of woodland or 18 million trees by 2030 to contribute to the UK's net zero carbon target.

Northern Ireland priorities for the marine environment include:

- the introduction of fisheries management measures to safeguard vulnerable features in marine protected areas, and
- the use of nature-based solutions to support sustainable development, e.g. natural flood protection and managed re-alignment of the coast.

Evaluating measures to conserve and enhance biodiversity

4. How should the Environmental Land Management scheme maintain and improve biodiversity? What role might alternative land use play in delivering improvements to biodiversity under the ELM scheme?

Agri-environment schemes have consistently influenced and incentivised land managers to implement actions that benefit nature – see question 7. Our new Environmental Land Management scheme will build on this foundation and be the cornerstone of our future agricultural policy. Founded on the principle of “public money for public goods”, the Environmental Land Management scheme is intended to provide a powerful vehicle for achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and commitment to net zero emissions.

Land managers will be paid for delivering the following public goods set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan: clean air; clean and plentiful water; thriving plants and wildlife; protection from and mitigation of environmental hazards; beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment; mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Maintaining and improving biodiversity can support the delivery of these goals.

Environmental Land Management will contribute to delivering improvements to biodiversity through paying for measures such as habitat creation, restoration and management and specific species management actions. This includes measures that could be carried out on land in agricultural production and measures involving land use change. As well as looking at integrating biodiversity into the farmed landscape, we are also exploring how the scheme might deliver the transformational land use change that is needed for delivering ambitious net zero commitments, for example through creating woodland or restoring wetlands such as peat bogs.

The new scheme will be launched in England in 2024 and so it is too early to say precisely how the scheme will deliver improvements to biodiversity. However, we are working closely with a range of environmental and agricultural stakeholders to collaboratively design the new scheme so that it is fit for purpose. We are currently running a programme of tests and trials and the scheme will be further refined through a National Pilot beginning in 2021, which will provide a critical opportunity to test the scheme design prior to full roll out across England.

5. How effective are the new measures to enhance biodiversity within the Environment Bill, particularly biodiversity net gain and Nature Recovery Networks? Do these measures complement existing regulatory frameworks and address issues surrounding how to value nature?

The nature measures established through the Environment Bill lay the foundation for the Nature Recovery Network. They set the framework for at least one legally binding

target for biodiversity. They establish spatial mapping and planning tools to inform nature recovery, as well as new duties and incentives that will work alongside our plans for an Environmental Land Management Scheme to drive change. They supplement and reinforce existing legislation on protected sites and species.

Biodiversity net gain is an approach to development which leaves habitats in a measurably better state than they were pre-development. Through our analysis we expect biodiversity net gain, in combination with Local Nature Recovery Strategies, to result in creation and the avoidance of loss of between 14,410 to 17,060 hectares of habitat for wildlife each year, delivering annual natural capital benefits of almost £1.4 billion.²⁷ As part of our £4.33m from HMT we are developing marine net gain metrics and evaluating the role net gain can play in consenting marine developments.

Many developers and local planning authorities already provide some environmental improvements, but currently the extent of any gains is unknown. Mandating a 10% biodiversity net gain in the Environment Bill will provide the incentive and consistency for other developers to deliver measurable gains. The Government has kept irreplaceable habitat sites out of scope of the net gain requirement and will consider the best approach for net gain where development affects statutory protected sites.

In our further response below, we assume that 'Nature Recovery Networks' is a reference to the Environment Bill measures for Local Nature Recovery Strategies. We have considered wider actions to support the Nature Recovery Network under question 6. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new system of spatial strategies for nature, covering the whole of England. Each strategy will, for the area that it covers; map the most valuable existing habitat for nature; and map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals such as climate change mitigation or air quality.

The net gain consultation revealed strong support for spatial plans to guide implementation and help target offsite habitat creation. Local Nature Recovery Strategies have been designed to fulfil this purpose and to help target and encourage wider action on nature's recovery and nature-based solutions.

The strategies will guide smooth and effective delivery of biodiversity net gain by helping developers and local authorities to best understand where development will have the least impact on biodiversity and where investment in new habitat creation or restoration will achieve best outcomes.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies act as the spatial planning framework for the Nature Recovery Network, by directing local action and investment for nature. The intention is for Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be consistent with nature

²⁷ Defra 2019, Biodiversity net gain and local nature recovery strategies impact assessment. Available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839610/net-gain-ia.pdf

measures promoted by the Environmental Land Management scheme – another source of funding for the Nature Recovery Network.

6. How should Nature Recovery Networks be planned, funded and delivered?

In this response, we differentiate between the Nature Recovery Network and the Local Nature Recovery Strategies. The former is a network of places where we are restoring or creating habitat for wildlife, for climate and for people. The latter are a means of identifying those places.

Our approach to implementing the Nature Recovery Network is to provide a spatial framework to plan nature recovery through Local Nature Recovery Strategies, develop partnerships to work together to plan and coordinate action and to integrate the Network's objectives into existing and planned funding streams to incentivise those actions.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new system of spatial strategies for nature, which will cover the whole of England. They will be locally-led and collaborative, bringing public, private and voluntary organisations together around a shared plan that will direct local action and investment for nature. Each strategy will, for the area it covers, map valuable existing habitat for nature; map proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals; and agree priorities for nature's recovery.

Government will bring forward regulations specifying the procedure to be followed in the production, publication, review and republication of the strategies, and statutory guidance specifying their contents. The Bill also requires Government to provide evidence and information, including a national habitat map, to underpin production.

We have worked closely with local authorities to develop measures in the Environment Bill, and we are committed to engaging further to bring forward a sensible implementation plan that maximises effectively delivery and minimises additional burdens. We will fully fund all new burdens arising from the Bill to make these ambitious strategies a reality.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies will draw together a range of funding streams to support delivery of the opportunities and actions identified. They have been designed to target investment from biodiversity net gain by helping developers and local authorities to understand where development will have the least impact and where investment in new habitat creation or restoration will achieve best outcomes for biodiversity. Additionally, all public authorities will be required to have regard to relevant strategies in the exercise of their functions, as part of a stronger duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

To deliver on these spatial plans, we are bringing together partnerships to take action. We are establishing a National Nature Recovery Network Partnership, led by Natural England, to initiate, coordinate and advise on action to recover nature. It will also collate and assist in the development of advice, data and tools to share with local partners to facilitate delivery.

To fund the Network, the government announced £25 million for a Nature Recovery Fund, of which £10 million of this has been brought forwards under the Green Recovery Fund so that money can be spent now while it is most needed as part of

the Covid-19 recovery. We are also integrating the objectives of the Network into a range of funding streams, from climate finance to the Environmental Land Management scheme.

7. How effective are other policies for conservation and enhancement of existing natural habitats, such as the Woodland Grant Schemes?

Agri-environment schemes

In England, agri-environment schemes (Countryside Stewardship and the legacy Environment Stewardship schemes) provide the principal source of funding for the management of protected sites in England and for the restoration and creation of wildlife-rich habitats on land-holdings. We estimate that holdings participating in current agri-environment schemes cover 58% of the agricultural area with 42% attracting some form of payment. In addition to these figures there are significant areas of woodland in schemes managed by the Forestry Commission (see below). The agri-environment schemes were seen as the most valuable mechanism to deliver biodiversity outcomes in the evaluation of Biodiversity 2020.

Agri-Environment Schemes across England have an annual monitoring and evaluation programme to assess biodiversity and wider environmental outcome changes in response to Agri-Environment Schemes measures. Natural England have produced Agri-Environment Schemes Monitoring and Evaluation reports²⁸ annually since 2017. There are also a number of studies that show improvements in habitat or recovery of species at an agreement or local level.

Detecting benefits at a regional or national scale is scientifically more challenging because of the many confounding factors and pressures that impact on biodiversity at these scales²⁹. Nonetheless there are an increasing number of studies showing that where the right options go in at the right density across the landscape, then there are detectable increases in wildlife abundance at that landscape scale^{30, 31, 32}. Despite this evidence it remains the case in England that many of our sites and habitats remain in unfavourable condition, and many species groups continue to decline as the pressures on them remain extant³⁹.

Woodland schemes

Countryside Stewardship is currently the primary source of funding to support woodland interventions in England. It addresses the threat to biodiversity posed by under-management³³ and supports woodland creation. In the 6 financial years of the

²⁸ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4556121339068416>

²⁹

<http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=20012>

³⁰ Baker, D.J., Freeman, S.N., Grice, P. & Siriwardena, G.M. (2012) Landscape-scale responses of birds to agri-environment management: a test of the English I Stewardship scheme. *J of App Ecology*, 49, 871–82

³¹ Pywell, R.F., Warman, E.A., Carvell, C., Sparks, T.H., Dicks, L.V., Bennett, D., Wright, A., Critchley, C.N.R. & Sherwood, A. (2005) Providing foraging resources for bumblebees in intensively farmed landscapes. *Biological Conservation*, 121, 479–494.

³² Pywell, R.F., Heard, M.S., Bradbury, R.B., Hinsley, S., Nowakowski, M., Walker, K.J. & Bullock, J.M. (2012) Wildlife-friendly farming benefits rare birds, bees and plants. *Biology Letters*, 8, 772–775.

³⁹ Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services indicators revised.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/850376/England_biodiversity_indicators_2019_rev2.pdf

³³ [State of Nature Report 2016 - RSPB see page 13](#)

Programme 2014/15 to 2019/20 £131 million of woodland grants were spent of which approximately 54% was allocated for woodland creation and 46% for improvement of existing woodland. At 31 March 2020⁴¹ 59 out of every 100 hectares of English

woodland are actively managed (up from 57 in September 2014), totalling 772,000 hectares of woodland in management. From April 2014 to March 2020 the Rural Development Programme for England supported the planting of 6,048 hectares of new woodland.³⁴

The Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation measure's principal objective is biodiversity. Other objectives are water quality and flood risk management. Applications that address more than one objective are favoured. In 2019/20 Government supported the planting of 1,956 hectare of woodland through this and a range of other initiatives.³⁵ Both woodland creation and woodland improvement also contribute to adapting to and mitigating climate change to meet domestic Carbon Budgets and international climate change commitments.

Protected sites

Protected sites are designated with the aim of conserving specific biological or geological feature. The total extent of land and sea protected in the UK through national and international protected areas, and through wider landscape designations, has increased by 7.4 million hectares, from 21.2 million hectares (ha) in December 2014 to 28.6 million hectares at the end of May 2019.⁴⁴

Peatland Restoration Grant

In July 2017, Defra launched a £10 million capital grant scheme for peatland restoration in England over three years. This is supporting four large-scale restoration projects across 62 sites in England. These projects are in their final year and are on track to deliver 5,948 hectares of peat restoration. This includes restoration of 5,476 hectares of upland peat habitats (mostly blanket bog) and 472 hectares of lowland peat habitats (mostly lowland raised bog, but including 7 hectares of floating peat bog). Around 2,000 hectares of restoration is taking place on peat sites without any form of nature conservation designation, contributing to delivery of the Nature Recovery Network.

[41 Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators 2019-20 see page 17](#)

[34 Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators 2019-20 see page 21](#)

[35 Government supported new planting of trees in England: Report for 2019-20](#)

Co-ordination of UK environmental policy

8. How can policy be better integrated to address biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development?

Our response to question 3 sets out the rationale for an integrated approach – biodiversity and ecosystems cannot be restored without addressing other environmental pressures, and the services they provide cannot be safeguarded if they are not understood. A natural capital approach, where we understand the value and interrelationships of ecosystems and other components of natural capital is at the heart of our plans for better integration across environmental and economic policies in England, and is central to our 25 Year Environment Plan. The application of the natural capital approach to projects and policies allows government to make decisions that account for the full range of their economic costs and benefits. In March 2018, HM Treasury's 'Green Book' guidance was revised to ensure that government Departments consider implications of any policy, programme or project on natural capital and the benefits they provide to individuals, communities and businesses, and we set out its application in more detail in question 13. We continue to reflect on this and consider how we can improve our decision-making processes further.

Clearer spatial planning for nature, for example through Local Nature Recovery Strategies in England, allows action to be targeted where it delivers a range of cobenefits for wildlife, for climate mitigation and for people.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 set out the mechanisms to manage the competing demands on our marine space. At its apex, the UK Marine Policy Statement articulates the vision of '*clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas*', and sets out detailed expectations, on a variety of areas including climate change and energy along with detailed policy objectives such as for marine protected areas. Marine Plans, which sit under the Statement, formulate and present outcomes for a marine plan area.

In May 2019, Defra published an outcome indicator framework, to support the 25 Year Environment Plan, building on work done over the last decade to better understand how nature and society interact. It builds upon international initiatives, such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, UN Sustainable Development Goals, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services and The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, as well as UK knowledge and expertise such as the UK National Ecosystem Assessment and the Natural Capital Committee. In developing the framework we considered factors such as which combination of indicators best describes how our natural capital assets and the environment as a whole system are changing and how best to capture and summarise the environmental changes that matter most to people.

9. How can biodiversity and ecosystems help achieve the air, soil and water quality objectives in the 25 Year Environment Plan?

Natural capital is the sum of our ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, soils, minerals, our air and our seas. These are all the elements of nature that directly or indirectly bring value to people and the country at large.

Although we often talk of 'biodiversity' as a *value* in and of itself, components of biodiversity such as ecological communities and species are key elements of natural capital, and it is through the functioning of ecosystems and their constituent species that we derive many of the services that bring value to people. Healthy functioning ecosystems in the soil, on land, in freshwater and in the marine environment support our objectives for air, water and soil health as well as supporting rich wildlife.

It is through carbon captured from the atmosphere by plants and incorporated into above-ground biomass and soil ecosystems that our forests and peatlands sequester and store carbon. It is through the actions of insects that our fruit and vegetables are pollinated. It is through cycling of water, oxygen and other minerals that our ecosystems improve air and water quality. Healthy functioning marine ecosystems support the production of the fish we rely on.

A greater understanding of the values provided by ecosystems and their component species is essential if we are to manage our land, freshwater, coastal and marine environment so that they continue to provide the services and benefit we rely on.

That is why, in England, we committed in the 25 Year Environment Plan to developing natural capital accounts and understanding of the benefits of natural capital through research.

That is also why we are taking significant new action to recover nature and restore ecosystems. Government is investing in woodland expansion, peatland restoration and natural flood management as contributions to tackling biodiversity loss, flooding and climate change. In March of this year, we announced a £640 million Nature for Climate Fund, which will support a significant increase in afforestation across England and help to restore 35,000 hectares of peatland over the next 5 years.

Following agreement of the post-2020 global framework at Convention on Biological Diversity COP15, we will publish a new Nature Strategy for England which will outline how we will implement new global targets domestically and meet our 25 Year Environment Plan goals for nature. The Nature Strategy will be clearly linked to other strategies, including those for Trees, Peat and Pollinators, and will provide the overarching narrative on how we are implementing our global commitments on biodiversity and climate change in England.

10. How well is the UK addressing biodiversity loss in its Overseas Territories and in international development partnerships with other countries?

Biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories

The UK's Overseas Territories (UKOTs) are global biodiversity hotspots. The UKOTs have high levels of endemism – species that occur in a particular territory but nowhere else on earth. 94% of species endemic to UK territories are found in the UKOTs³⁶. The Government recognises the continuing need to support the UK Overseas Territories in preserving their unique environments and remains committed to supporting biodiversity through the actions and ambitions set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan, such as the Blue Belt Initiative, which has supported the delivery of the commitment to enhance marine protection for over 4 million square kilometres of marine environment across the UKOTs since 2016.

Invasive non-native species continue to be one of the biggest environmental threats to biodiversity across the world which is why we are providing resources and technical expertise to the UKOTs to increase biosecurity capacity by developing and implementing comprehensive biosecurity systems and helping to fund eradication programmes.

Since 2012 the Government's Darwin Plus Programme has committed £22 million towards 122 individual projects supporting conservation in marine, terrestrial and freshwater environments.

Following the recent call for evidence on 'Safeguarding the environment in the British Overseas Territories' the Government announced that funding currently made available to the UKOTs through the Darwin Plus and Darwin programmes will be uplifted to £10m per annum from 2021. This significant increase, alongside the £25m Government funding provided for the Blue Belt Programme, underlines this Government's commitment to protecting the unique natural environments of the UKOTs.

Biodiversity in international development partnerships

The UK is working together to deliver solutions with international development partners that are good for people, nature and the climate. For example, from 2016 – 21, we committed 18% of bilateral International Climate Finance (over \$1 billion), to programmes that support nature-based solutions. The UK has made Overseas Development Assistance investments in The Global Environment Facility . The UK's main dedicated contribution to tackling biodiversity loss is through our funding of the Global Environment Facility which totals £250 million between 2018 and 2022. The Global Environment Facility provides grants and other support to developing countries for projects and programmes to address global environmental problems. Since its inception in 1991 it has managed more than 3,300 protected areas covering 860 million hectares (an area larger than Brazil); 1,010 climate change mitigation projects contributing to 2.7 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emission reductions, sustainable management of 34 of the world's major river basins.

³⁶ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/projects/the-uks-wildlife-overseas-a-stocktake-of-nature-in-our-overseas-territories/>

Current forestry programmes, which total £430 million, are critical for protecting important habitats and tackling one of the key areas of biodiversity loss. This

includes Partnerships for Forests, a £120 million The Department for International Development (DFID) programme running from 2015-2023, set up to support public-private partnerships to reduce deforestation associated with agricultural commodities. Through 34 public-private partnerships, it has the potential to bring up to 3.4 million hectares of land under sustainable management and mobilise up to £280 million in private investment into sustainable land use.

The Forest Governance Markets & Climate Programme (£280 million, 2011-2023) is focussed on stopping the illegal timber trade, and since 2018 also includes £4.3 million for activities that tackle illegal wildlife trafficking between central African countries, countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion, Indonesia and China. This funding is being used to strengthen national customs and trade regulations and their enforcement, and to support local level civil society monitoring, enforcement and investigations.

The Prime Minister announced at the UN General Assembly in September last year, a new £220 million International Biodiversity Fund, to help protect and restore the natural world. This includes £90 million for the Darwin Initiative and an additional £30 million over three years to combat the Illegal Wildlife Trade. It also includes a new and ambitious, £100 million Biodiverse Landscapes Fund. The Fund will seek to support an estimated five biologically diverse, inter-connected, multi-functional landscapes. The Fund will address biodiversity loss and tackle poverty and is being developed by DFID and Defra to draw on the expertise in both departments.

For oceans, the UK has taken a leading role in tackling ocean plastic pollution as co-chair (with Vanuatu) of the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance Blue Charter Action Group. Since its launch in 2018, the group has grown its membership to include 34 of 54 Commonwealth countries, and committed up to £70 million to address plastic pollution. Within this funding commitment, the UK has delivered Official Development Assistance (ODA) to commonwealth countries through a variety of programmes, including; up to £10 million for a Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance technical assistance facility, support to develop ocean plastic policies and science expertise in CCOA countries through the Commonwealth Litter Programme, delivery of National Plastic Action Partnerships through the World Economic Forum Global Plastic Action Partnership, and delivery of Tide Turners Plastic Challenge Badge in partnership with UNEP.

11. What outcomes and protections should the UK Government be pushing for at the forthcoming UN negotiations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15?

The UK's objective for the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15 is to agree a framework that spurs action and the transformative changes needed for halting and reversing global biodiversity loss. We will support and push for ambitious and

practical targets, strengthened by coherent implementation mechanisms that are commensurate with the scale of the challenge. It is also important that targets are evidence-based, measurable and have adequate monitoring criteria in place.

Resource mobilisation will be a critical component. The UK will support a package of measures that draws on Parties' experience of implementing the current Strategy for Resource Mobilisation and Aichi Target 20.

The UK is leading the Global Ocean Alliance in support of a new global target of protecting at least 30% of the global ocean within Marine Protected Areas by 2030. This "30by30" target would represent a trebling of the current CBD 10% marine protection target for 2020 and is strongly supported by scientific evidence as necessary to reverse existing key drivers of marine biodiversity loss, increase climate change resilience, adaptation and mitigation and sustain long-term ocean health. MPAs serve as a good example of marine nature-based solutions.

2021 will be a critical year for nature and a significant opportunity to address the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change in an integrated way. As the host of UNFCCC COP26, we will reinforce and amplify awareness and action on the linkages between these two global issues, including in the lead up to Convention on Biological Diversity COP15. Nature-based solutions play a critical role in tackling both climate change and biodiversity loss, which is why 'nature' will be a key focus of COP26 in Glasgow. In taking this approach we will demonstrate the multiple benefits of nature-based solutions for climate and biodiversity, as well as the development benefits for people.

Despite the delays to the process and the postponement of Convention on Biological Diversity COP15, Defra continues to fully engage in negotiations on the Convention on Biological Diversity post-2020 framework and associated targets which remain a priority and we are committed to ensuring that the Convention on Biological Diversity delivers the step change needed to tackle the global crisis of biodiversity loss.

Economics and biodiversity:

12. What are the possible approaches to balancing economic growth and conservation of nature and its contributions? Is there evidence these approaches work and can be implemented?

Under the Convention on Biological Diversity the UK is committed to mainstreaming or integrating biodiversity into decision making in other sectors, so that the value of biodiversity and wider natural capital is accounted for in decision making in key sectors such as planning, production and consumption and wider business activity *Planning and nature*.

The Government is committed to making its ambition of 300,000 new homes a year a reality and has set out proposals to reform the planning system in England in our consultation *Planning for the Future*³⁷. Maximising environmental benefits is central

³⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

to the proposals. They include revising the National Planning Policy Framework to ensure policies support climate change mitigation and adaptation (including tackling flood risk), as well as creating places which are better-designed and more beautiful.

The planning system exists to balance social, economic and environmental needs through sustainable development. England's planning reforms, as set out in the recent The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government publication, *Planning for the Future*, will leave an inheritance of environmental improvement – with environmental assets protected, more green spaces provided, more sustainable development supported, new homes that are much more energy efficient and new places that can become the heritage of the future, built closer to where people want to live and work to reduce our reliance on carbon-intensive modes of transport. Mandating biodiversity net gain, through the Environment Bill, will help ensure that new residential and commercial development meets the needs of people and the local economy, while contributing to ecological recovery and enriching the quality of local greenspaces.

Later this autumn we will be launching a consultation on a reformed framework for assessing environmental impacts and enhancement opportunities. The objectives will be a quicker and simpler system which protects our precious species, habitats and ecosystems and takes advantage of opportunities for maximising environmental benefits.

We will maximise the opportunity for reforming environmental planning regulations so that we not only make the system more efficient, but also create better outcomes for the environment through more data-driven, strategic approaches. We will credibly and demonstrably set out how we can support delivery of Net Zero, help to mitigate and adapt to climate change, recover nature and reverse declines in protected species and habitats and achieve compliance with our international obligations. Working with BEIS and the Crown Estate as well as key stakeholders such as the Wildlife Trusts and Renewables UK we have already begun identifying pilots to test ways to increase pathways to growth for offshore wind and enhance marine biodiversity.

Major transport infrastructure providers, like Highways England and Network Rail, and developers like High Speed 2 limited (HS2), have their own commitments on biodiversity.

Sustainable consumption and production

The Government committed in the 25 Year Environment Plan to leaving a lighter footprint on the global environment by enhancing sustainability and in particular reducing our impact on the world's forests. This seeks to ensure that the UK's consumption and impact on natural capital are sustainable, at home and overseas; and advocates that environmental sustainability should be at the very heart of global production and trade.

Government has published an indicator framework to describe environmental change relating to goals set within the 25 Year Environmental Plan. This includes headline indicator 15: "Overseas environmental impacts of UK consumption of key commodities." A global environment footprint indicator has the potential to be used in

a wide range of contexts; negotiation of trade agreements, effective implementation of multi-national environmental agreements, targeting of Overseas Development Assistance spend and scenario-based modelling to identify the effectiveness of proposed policy solutions. We are working to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of a global environment footprint indicator, which includes reviewing the existing methodologies of global impact indicators.

In July 2019 the Government convened the Global Resource Initiative taskforce in response to the 25 Year Environmental Plan commitment, bringing together representatives from business, finance and civil society to investigate what the UK can do to reduce our global environmental footprint. The taskforce published its final recommendations report in March 2020 which set out 14 recommendations for combatting deforestation in global-supply chains³⁸. This included a key recommendation that the Government introduce a mandatory due diligence obligation on business. The Government has responded to this recommendation by launching a consultation on proposals for a new law that would prohibit businesses in the UK from using commodities that were not produced in accordance with the laws of the country where they were grown. Businesses in scope would need to undertake due diligence on the commodities they use, and to report publicly on this exercise.

Transitioning from a linear economy to a circular economy

The government's Resources and Waste Strategy³⁹, published in December 2018, is framed by natural capital thinking and guided by two overarching objectives: to maximise the value of resource use and to minimise waste and its impact on the environment. Its aim is to move away from a linear 'take, make, use and throw' approach to resources to circular approach. A more circular, resource efficient model will reduce the impacts on our environment from extraction, processing, manufacture and disposal. The International Resources Panel report estimates the extraction and

processing of materials, fuels and food make up about half of total global greenhouse gas emissions and more than 90 per cent of biodiversity loss and water stress⁴⁰.

The Strategy means a shift in economic activity towards reuse, repair, remanufacture and greater recycling as well as sales of products as services and a focus on designing out waste in products, buildings and infrastructure, driving innovation in this field. Studies show that this can benefit the economy, creating up to half a million jobs gross or 100,000 net jobs across all skill levels and regions of the UK by 2030⁴¹.

The Strategy includes a set of practicable and implementable policies, many of which are tried and tested in other countries. We have made progress in delivering these commitments to date including through developing policy for consultation, building on earlier policies such as reducing food waste and reducing the use of carrier bags.

³⁸ Global Resource Initiative Taskforce: Final recommendations report 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-resource-initiative-taskforce>

³⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/resources-and-waste-strategy-for-england>

⁴⁰ International Resource Panel, Global Resources Outlook 2019

⁴¹ WRAP (2015) Employment and the circular economy

The Scottish Government set out a Green New Deal in 2019 to rethink how and where to make investments, including by harnessing the power of the Scottish National Investment Bank; launching a £3 billion Green Investment Portfolio; and working with local government on plans to introduce a Green Growth Accelerator to attract green finance to Scotland. The Deal has been expanded and enhanced to form the basis of a commitment to a green recovery from Covid-19.

Business and biodiversity. Nature based financial disclosure.

Government is working with partners to explore how to improve the decision-making processes of financial institutions and the companies they invest in, so they take account of their dependencies and impacts on nature. Lord Goldsmith recently confirmed Defra's participation in and support for a market-led Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures working group to undertake a 6-month scoping programme. The Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures working group will use familiar-to-market structures to help the financial community incorporate nature-related dependencies and impacts into their risk architecture and decision points. This will help inform and align capital allocation with environmental goals by enabling credible, decision-grade data generation and reporting that will allow investors and lenders to differentiate between companies that are nature-positive and those that are not. We will incorporate the learnings of Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures, where relevant, into the design and delivery frameworks of the market-led Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures

13. What does the UK Government need to do to maximise human prosperity – in terms of health, economic, and social wellbeing—within the ecological and resource constraints of a finite planet? What alternative models and measures of economic welfare can feasibly help achieve this?

Gross domestic product tells us only part of our economic story; it excludes many services provided by natural capital, and focuses only on flows of income, expenditure and output, not stocks of capital, including natural capital, that underpin them. A natural capital approach, where we understand the value of our ecosystems and other components of our natural capital, will help us to account for the full range of economic, social and environmental impacts of our decisions.

This is why in 2017, in our Industrial Strategy, we committed to working across the UK to preserve and enhance natural capital, setting out an ambitious approach in the 25 Year Environment Plan for England to ensure all aspects of natural capital are taken into account in our approach to major investment decisions, while each of the

devolved administrations take forward their own work to secure and support the UK's natural capital.

We are seeking to incorporate the full spectrum of natural capital and the benefits it provides into analysis and appraisal across government and to provide the data and tools to support those decisions. Cost-effectiveness, and Cost Benefit Analysis are standard economic techniques used at the start of any policy development. In March 2018, HM Treasury's 'Green Book' guidance was revised to ensure that government Departments consider implications of any policy, programme or project on natural capital and the benefits they provide to individuals, communities and businesses⁵¹.

Building on the Green Book approach, in January 2020, Defra launched an online resource to help ensure better environmental decision-making by valuing our 'natural capital'. 'Enabling a Natural Capital Approach' (ENCA)⁵² is a comprehensive and integrated set of evidence and guidance about UK natural capital. The resource was developed in collaboration with experts from across Defra and its agencies and informed by the work of academic, professional and voluntary bodies such as the Valuing Nature Network, to ensure the best available evidence is included in a userfriendly way. It is intended to help policy makers, businesses, landowners and public sector organisations to include the value of natural capital for the benefit of people and the economy as well as to protect and enhance it.

The government has continued to develop national natural capital accounts - the next publication of which will include initial marine and coastal accounts for the first time. This work is led by the Office for National Statistics in partnership with Defra. A well-developed national set of natural capital accounts, will allow government to:

- monitor losses and gains in our natural capital over time
- identify priority areas for investment and inform resourcing and management decisions
- highlight links with economic activity and pressures on natural capital

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685903/The_Green_Book.pdf

⁵² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/enabling-a-natural-capital-approach-enca>

In March 2019, HM Treasury commissioned an independent, global Review on the Economics of Biodiversity led by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta. The review sets out to assess the economic benefits of biodiversity globally, assess the economic costs and risks of biodiversity loss, and identify a range of actions that can enhance biodiversity and deliver economic prosperity.

The Review's interim report – published in April 2020 – set out plans to examine how our societies are embedded in nature; including what we extract and return to the natural environment, how nature supports our economies and wellbeing, and the negative consequences of human disruption of nature. The government looks forward to receiving the final report later this year and will respond publicly in due course.

Pairing nature-based solutions to climate change with biodiversity:

14. Which nature-based solutions are most effective in achieving both climate and biodiversity goals?

Nature-based solutions globally

Natural climate solutions - nature-based Solutions⁵³ *for climate change* - have the potential to cost-effectively deliver up to one third of *global* climate mitigation required by 2030 to hold warming below 2°C, while also providing adaptation and resilience benefits such as natural flood management, cooling and connectivity, delivering wins for biodiversity and development.⁵⁴ Whilst there is limited analysis across multiple ecosystems, current evidence for the tropics⁵⁵ suggests that the most cost effective Nature-based solutions for climate mitigation are: protection⁵⁶ (avoided forest conversion), restoration⁵⁷ (reforestation); and management⁵⁸ (trees in agricultural land).⁵⁹

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that ‘blue carbon’ habitats (e.g. mangroves, saltmarsh and seagrass meadows) have the highest carbon sinks per unit area of any ecosystems³. Maintaining the health of these ecosystems has significant additional benefits to society. Allowing our marine spaces to recover, alongside protection of our coral reefs, mangroves, saltmarsh and seagrass meadows can reduce the impacts of sea-level rise, coastal erosion and flooding⁴². This protection also contributes to climate change mitigation benefits via carbon sequestration⁴³.

Action on domestic nature-based solutions.

Nature-based solution can also play a key role *domestically* in achieving our carbon reduction and biodiversity targets, and in helping us adapt to climate change. Our assessment is that on land, restoring degraded peatlands; appropriately implementing multi-purpose woodlands; and restoring or recreating wetland and coastal habitats will offer the greatest benefits for tackling climate change, whilst also benefitting biodiversity.

⁵³ Defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits

⁵⁴ Griscom et al (2017) <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/114/44/11645.full.pdf>

⁵⁵ The study was limited to terrestrial ecosystems in tropical countries because they harbour the majority of global NCS potential (61%), have the highest rates of forest loss and gain, and the highest gross carbon fluxes compared with temperate and boreal latitudes.

⁵⁶ Protection pathways also consistently offer the most diverse set of biodiversity and ecosystem service benefits.

⁵⁷ Restoration pathways invoke the largest tradeoffs with business-as-usual land uses, since relatively large areas would need to be taken out of current use and returned to native cover per tonne of climate mitigation outcome.

⁴² Simard F, Laffoley D and Baxter JM (eds.). 2016. Marine Protected Areas and Climate Change: Adaptation and Mitigation Synergies, Opportunities and Challenges. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN: 52.

⁴³ IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, 2019.

⁵⁸ 'Manage' pathways, whilst having a lower climate benefit per hectare can avoid challenges associated with land use change often confronting 'protect' and 'restore' pathways, such as the potential need for alternative livelihoods when reforesting grazing lands or halting the conversion of forest to agriculture.

⁵⁹ Griscom et al (2020) *National mitigation potential from natural climate solutions in the tropics*. Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B37520190126

Peatlands are unique habitats and the UK's largest terrestrial carbon store. However, degradation caused by past drainage means they currently emit an estimated 23MT CO₂e per annum (11MT in England). Reducing these emissions by restoring can turn peatlands back into a long-term net greenhouse gas sink, though this take many decades. Tree planting is another of the main contributors to nature-based carbon sequestration: the UK's woodlands currently sequester 18MT CO₂e per annum – about 4% of the UK's gross emissions (449MT in 2018).

Both peatland and woodland can also provide adaptation benefits. Healthy, restored peatlands provide a sustainable supply of high-quality drinking water and are resilient to drought; they also intercept and store greater volumes of water, releasing it over a longer period and mitigating flood risk, compared with degraded peatlands.

Woodland *creation*, when spatially targeted, can reduce flood risk, contribute to water and food security, provide and connect habitat, provide shade and cooling during heatwaves and support human wellbeing. Meanwhile, woodland *improvement* provides opportunities to enhance the resilience of trees, including to climate change risks such as pests and diseases, and maintain future carbon stocks.

A total of 25% of UK mainland waters are protected within 357 Marine Protected Areas and through our Blue Belt programme, we are on track to protect four million square kilometres of ocean around the UK's Overseas Territories by 2020. This means that at least 60% of the entire UK marine estate, will be designated within Marine Protected Areas by the end of this year. These Marine Protected Areas range from full 'no-take' Marine Protected Areas, to multiple-use Marine Protected Areas which recognise the effectiveness of the sustainable use of marine resources while also protecting and conserving the wider ecosystem, protecting its resilience to future climate change risks.

Governments across the UK are fully seized on the potential of nature-based solutions to address both climate and biodiversity goals and new funding has been introduced across the UK.

For example, in England, in 2020, the government announced a £640 million 'Nature for Climate' fund to generate a significant increase in afforestation and peat restoration and is investigating the potential for protecting and restoring coastal habitats including seagrass and saltmarsh.

In Scotland, through the Programme for Government, the Scottish Government has committed, *inter alia*, to further peatland and forest restoration. For example, announcing £20 million for peatland restoration in 2020-21 with a commitment to invest more than £250 million over 10 years; and an expansion of investment in forestry by £6 million in 2020/21 to over £64 million (further details in annex 1).

In Wales, the Welsh Government has committed, *inter alia*, to ensuring all peatlands with semi-natural vegetation are subject to favourable management or restoration (circa 30,000 ha) and to restore a minimum of 25% (circa 5,000 ha) of the most modified areas; and increased its Glastir Woodland Creation budget fourfold to £8

million. It has also begun work to establish a National Forest for Wales (further details in annex 1).

15. What would constitute clear indicators of progress and costeffectiveness of nature-based solutions and how should trade-offs and co-benefits associated with nature-based solutions, biodiversity and socioeconomic outcomes be considered?

Developing indicators for nature-based solutions is challenging due to the inherent complexity of ecosystem function and because our knowledge of how to value the full range of benefits from nature-based solutions is incomplete. It typically takes a long period to establish a nature-based solution, for them to deliver benefits, and for these benefits to be captured and quantified; much of this work is therefore ongoing.

There are particular challenges in the marine environment, where monitoring can be expensive due to need for underwater survey techniques, and inevitably some services have to rely on qualitative assessment as they are harder, if not impossible, to quantify reliably. Furthermore, to understand the full extent of nature-based solutions, monitoring of multiple different metrics is required, adding to complexity and costs (e.g. soil metrics, air quality metrics and water metrics).

To date the UK Government has not developed specific indicators for nature-based solutions. The Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry sector of the greenhouse gas emission inventory, records emissions and removals from these sectors, however this only quantifies the climate change mitigation benefits. The Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry sector in the inventory uses our most comprehensive research data combined with land use modelling information to provide an annual UNFCCC submission on the contribution of agricultural, forestry and other land use activities to greenhouse gas emissions. In many instances, we use the most advanced reporting methodologies ('Tier 3') to report our emissions, for example for forestry. The inventory includes information on, for example, the absorption of carbon by existing forests, the carbon stock reduction from forest harvesting, the impacts of deforestation for settlement and of woodland planting. However, it currently only includes some elements of peatland management. As such the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry greenhouse gas inventory can be used as a potential indicator of the overall contribution of land uses to carbon sequestration and other greenhouse gas emissions; however, it does not account for climate adaptation and biodiversity impacts of Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry solutions.

16. How can funding be mobilised to support effective nature-based solutions to climate change? How can the private sector be encouraged to contribute to funding?

Internationally, mobilising support for nature-based solutions is at the heart of the UK's ambition as president of the 26th COP to the UNFCCC. Nature-based solutions are underfunded, with less than 4 percent of public financing going to nature⁶² despite natural climate solution (nature-based solutions for climate) offering potential to cost-effectively deliver up to one third of global climate mitigation required by 2030

to hold warming below 2°C.⁶³ The scale of investment needed (and the state of Covid-19 stressed public balance sheets) means that mobilising private capital is critical.

As part of the Nature Campaign, the UK will be driving global action on sustainable land use and commodities trade, sustainable agriculture, and increasing sustainable finance for nature. The UK is demonstrating its commitment by increasing its International Climate Finance to at least £11.6 billion over five years from 2020 to 2025. This will include an increased focus on the promotion and scaling of naturebased solutions to deliver climate and sustainable development outcomes. Through the International Climate Finance, the UK has invested £23 million in projects to protect, restore and sustainably manage mangroves for their climate mitigation and adaptation benefits.

Recognising the indivisible link between ocean health and its effect on the sustainable development prospects of the world's most disadvantaged communities, this Government will establish a £500 million Blue Planet Fund. Financed from the UK Official Development Assistance Budget, the Blue Planet Fund will help Official Development Assistance eligible countries to protect and enhance marine ecosystems through the sustainable management of ocean assets, to reduce poverty. Important outcomes of this fund will include mobilising private investment and enabling and investing in inclusive nature-based solutions.

Domestically, the government is also introducing measures to mobilise private sector funding. In England, public sector funding sources will continue to play an important role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment, for example, through our Environmental Land Management scheme, £640 million Nature for Climate Fund and a £25 million Nature Recovery Fund⁴⁴. However, as the scale of ambition cannot be achieved with public funding alone, it is critical that there is also private sector investment.

Our landmark Environment Bill contains measures to stimulate private sector investment, including the power to set long-term, legally binding targets. Introducing a robust target-setting framework sends a clear signal to investors, providing the much-needed long-term certainty to support planning, innovation and investment.

We are also shaping new markets to incentivise private sector investment in projects that protect and enhance the natural environment, including through the Woodland Carbon Guarantee and net gain for biodiversity in the planning system.

⁶² <https://www.climatepolicyinitiative.org/publication/global-landscape-of-climate-finance-2019/>

⁶³ Griscom et al (2017) <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/114/44/11645.full.pdf>

In the 25 Year Environment Plan the UK government committed to exploring the potential for a 'Natural Environment Impact Fund' to stimulate private sector investment in natural environment project in England. As an important step towards this, in 2021 we will establish a natural environment Investment Readiness Fund; a three-year, £10 million capability and capacity-building grant programme. This will

⁴⁴ £40 million from the Nature for Climate and Nature Recovery Fund have been brought forward as part of the eNGO Challenge Fund. This will ensure it can be spent now when it is needed most as part of our green recovery from the coronavirus outbreak.

support the development of natural environment projects that can blend different forms of public-private investment to protect and enhance the natural environment and use different ecosystem service revenue streams to repay investment.

10432 words including subheadings

- **Annex 1. Information on action and reporting for biodiversity internationally and in each of the four countries**

Domestic biodiversity policy is devolved in the UK. The UK is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and each of the four countries produces their own plans or strategies to support international commitments, although some functions, such as progress reporting are coordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee under the UK biodiversity framework. The UK government retains responsibility for international biodiversity policy and negotiations and support for the UK Overseas Territories.

This annex outlines some key actions to enhance biodiversity, as well as to monitor and report on trends in biodiversity to supplement questions 1-3.

Our international actions

The UK is committed to playing a leading role in developing an ambitious and transformative post-2020 framework for biodiversity under the Convention on Biological Diversity. With regards to our international action:

- Our international spending on biodiversity has been growing and was over £200 million per year as of 2017/18.
- We are doubling the UK's contribution to International Climate Finance, to £11.6 billion from 2021-2026, including for nature-based solutions.
- We have announced a £220 million International Biodiversity Fund, including a new £100 million Biodiverse Landscapes Fund; significant uplifts to the Darwin Initiative and funding to tackle illegal wildlife trade; £30 million in funding to stop illegal deforestation and £9.6 million for a Just Rural Transition programme to help make farming more sustainable.
- We are introducing one of the world's toughest bans on the sale of ivory.
- We have committed in our manifesto to ban the import of hunting trophies from endangered animals. We held a consultation and call for evidence earlier this year and are currently analysing the responses; we will publish the government responses shortly.
- In the marine environment, the UK is leading in the fight against marine plastic pollution, co-chairing the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance, and is leading the Global Ocean Alliance of countries in support of a new Convention on Biological Diversity target to protect at least 30% of the global ocean in Marine Protected Areas by 2030 (the "30by30" target).

Biodiversity action and reporting in England

The 25 Year Environment Plan marked a step-change in ambition for wildlife and the natural environment in England⁴⁵. We are already taking action to fulfil this ambition:

⁴⁵ 25 Year Environment Plan <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

- We have brought forward the first Environment Bill in over 20 years with ambitious measures to address the biggest environmental priorities of our age, including restoring and enhancing nature.
- We are investing in woodland expansion and peatland restoration as a contribution to tackling biodiversity loss and climate change.
- We have announced new funding⁴⁶ for nature through our Nature Recovery, Nature for Climate and Natural Environment Impact Funds, supporting our ambition to create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat.
- We are developing a new Environmental Land Management scheme that will reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmental public goods achieving key objectives as set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan, including thriving plants and wildlife.
- We are expanding our protected areas at sea. An ambitious third tranche of 41 Marine Conservation Zones were designated in May 2019.
- We are investing in new ways to mitigate and compensate for harm from offshore wind farm developments and to improve monitoring to maximise environmental gains.

In England, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are monitored by Natural England to assess their condition to ensure they continue to be suitable to sustain the features for which they were designated (the Joint Nature Conservation Committee monitors marine areas outside of 12nm).

Condition monitoring allows government to track progress against the 25 Year Environment Plan goal to restore 75% of SSSI area to favourable condition (from the current value of 38.9%) and allows Natural England to identify management interventions required for particular sites.

The number of sites monitored annually has fallen in recent years, and most sites have not been assessed for over six years. However, additional funding has been made available in 2020/21 to accelerate protected site monitoring reforms, in line with the Natural England Monitoring Strategy 2019⁴⁷.

To strengthen monitoring within and outside protected sites, government has announced a new £5m Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme. The funding will be used to trial solutions to developing national and regional satellitederived maps, understanding the status of our protected sites, and modelling to forecast change, plan interventions and evaluate outcomes.

The Environment Agency undertakes a range of water quality monitoring within waterbodies to track environmental improvement under the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 which will form

⁴⁶ £25m Nature Recovery Fund; £640 million Nature for Climate Fund; £10 million Natural Environment Impact Fund; Tripling Darwin Plus (UK OTs) to £10m/yr. Budget 2020, March:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/budget-2020-documents/budget-2020>

⁴⁷ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5752753379082240>

our regulatory framework outside the EU. This is part of a long-term monitoring network

used to understand if the quality of waterbodies is changing and why that might be happening. The network of sampling points provides a complete baseline of ecological status, covering every river water body in England. The information gathered offers greater confidence in our classification of status and reported statistics of environmental change in river water bodies and inform the EA's river basin management plans.

Biodiversity action and reporting in Scotland

The Scottish Government is playing a leading role in developing and presenting the input of the global subnational constituency for the new Convention on Biological Diversity framework. A new or revised UK Biodiversity framework for the next decade will be critical in building upon the collaborative approaches already undertaken toward the Aichi Targets, recognising the importance of delivering for biodiversity and the climate through implementing nature-based solutions that are appropriate to each region of the UK. Recognising devolved competency, Scotland provides its own National Strategy and updates on progress toward the Aichi Targets directly to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Scotland-level strategies and data are separate to, but form part of, UK-level contributions.

The Scottish Government has stated that conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is a key priority, which is reflected in its Programme for Government, and is committed to doing more to protect and enhance Scotland's species and habitats. These ambitions are set out in the *Scottish Biodiversity Strategy* and its supplement, the *2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity*. A wide range of work across public, private and third sectors is undertaken to deliver the Strategy's outcomes. Monitoring of these activities is undertaken by various Scottish environment agencies.

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy aims to deliver against the Aichi targets via twelve priority projects which are outlined in Scotland's Biodiversity Route Map to 2020. These include 'Restoration of Peatlands', 'Dynamic Coast' and 'Sustainable Land Management'. Our biodiversity strategy also aims to connect people with nature for their health and well-being, with projects based around our 'Natural Health Service'.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 requires Ministers to report every three years to Parliament on progress with implementation of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Progress against the Strategy, and towards the Aichi Targets, is measured through an established indicator programme and progress reports prepared by Scottish Natural Heritage are laid before the Scottish Parliament. In 2019, assessment of progress toward the Aichi targets showed Scotland to be on track in delivering 8 out of 20 of the targets, which compares favourably with the global average. The most recent report, published in June 2020, shows a broadly neutral description of progress in delivering against the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy with nearly twice as many indicators showing improvement as those worsening. However, the Scottish Government has acknowledged that more needs to be done.

The Scottish Government has also developed the Natural Capital Asset Index, to track annual changes in our natural capital stock. In 2019 Scotland published country-level Natural Capital Accounts (2019), providing an estimate of the monetary value of the ecosystems.

Existing Scottish Government commitments towards nature-based solutions and other measures to address both climate change and biodiversity, include:

- £20 million for peatland restoration in 2020-21 with a commitment to invest more than £250 million over 10 years.
- Expanding investment in forestry by £6 million in 2020/21 to over £64 million
- £40 million investment in the Agricultural Transformation Programme
- Continuing to provide £42 million annually to local authorities for flood protection and increased funding for the Scottish Flood Forum to £189,000 in 2019-20
- Increasing funding for Biodiversity Challenge Fund to £5 million
- Commitment to plant an additional 12,000 hectares of forest supported by an additional £5 million investment
- Commitment to establish a new virtual centre to co-ordinate marine climate change science and research in response to the global climate emergency
- Making use of Regional Land Use Plans

Through the 2020 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government is also making new commitments to continue to support biodiversity including through continued and significant investment into forestry for new planting and nursery stocks, and the expansion of national forests; with the intention to pilot mini-forests to trial this innovative approach to restoring biodiversity. Continued investment in peatlands will allow the rate of peatland restoration to increase significantly - the Scottish Government will ensure an additional £3 million funding for the Biodiversity Challenge Fund in 2021-22, to enable the delivery of existing priorities within Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy.

The Scottish Government is also continuing to make strides towards addressing climate and biodiversity issues across its wider environmental programme by continuing to develop the Agricultural Transformation Programme utilising the Agricultural Transformation Fund including a capital grant scheme; putting in place a £70 million fund to improve local authority collection infrastructure; introducing legislation to increase the carrier bag minimum charge from 5p to 10p; investing £2 million for Islands Green Recovery Programme; and continuing the Scottish Land Fund, providing £10m per year to help communities purchase assets.

The Scottish Government has made a strong commitment to a green recovery from COVID-19.

Biodiversity action and reporting in Wales

The Welsh Government has introduced far reaching legislation to ensure that action for biodiversity and ecosystems is integrated across the public sector in Wales, through The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and The Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Wales's priorities for natural resources and biodiversity are set out in the Natural Resources Policy, and The Nature Recovery

Action Plan outlines actions to maintain and enhance biodiversity in line with goals and targets set out in the CBD's global strategy to 2020.

In Wales, evidence from the State of Natural Resources Report shows that biodiversity is continuing to decline. For the land-based and freshwater species assessed in the UK, of those found in Wales, 10% of plants, 8% of fungi and lichens, 36% of vertebrates and 5% invertebrates are at risk of extinction. However there are some success stories, including recovery of the polecat, bittern, large blue butterfly and the red kite. Further progress is needed within Wales to maintain and enhance resilient ecological networks across landscapes and restore protected sites.

A monitoring framework for the recently refreshed Nature Recovery Action Plan is being developed, which will draw on the UK indicators, link to National Indicators and State of Natural Resources Report and align with the post 2020 CBD framework. Wales also provides key evidence for natural resources and ecosystems through the National Indicators and State of Natural Resources Report. The first was produced in 2016 with a second iteration due in 2021.

Terrestrial protected site monitoring is carried out by Natural Resources Wales. This is supplemented by the work of the Environment & Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, and with data collected by our network of three Local Environmental Records Centres.

In Wales, nature-based solutions are one of the three priorities of the Welsh Ministers Natural Resources Policy to help tackle the nature and climate change emergencies and to help deal with pressing well-being issues such as accessible green space and flood risk. In April 2020 Natural Resources Wales produced seven area statements which will play a key role in taking forward place-based working to help implement the priorities and opportunities in the Natural Resources Policy and Nature Recovery Action Plan. On peatland restoration Wales has committed to ensuring all peatlands with semi-natural vegetation are subject to favourable management or restoration (circa 30,000 ha) and to restore a minimum of 25% (circa 5,000 ha) of the most modified areas. On woodland creation Welsh Government has set a target for increasing woodland by at least 2,000 hectares a year and has increased its Glastir Woodland Creation budget fourfold to £8 million. It has also begun work to establish a National Forest for Wales. To promote biodiversity and nature-based solutions in our urban areas Planning Policy Wales now requires planning authorities to adopt a strategic and proactive approach to green infrastructure and biodiversity by producing Green Infrastructure Assessments.

Biodiversity action and reporting in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, nature conservation and the issues affecting biodiversity are seen as key challenges, especially in the context of climate change. The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy sets out the main issues and objectives to address the overall target of halting the loss of biodiversity.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has a rolling programme for monitoring Areas of Special Scientific Interest, specifically assessing the condition of their significant biodiversity features and overall site integrity. The rolling six-year monitoring programme has slipped in recent years, and monitoring resource is being developed to address this. Species-specific monitoring data is also provided to

Northern Ireland Environment Agency by a range of external partners, financed through the Northern Ireland Environment Fund and a range of other mechanisms.

In order for Northern Ireland to progress against Aichi Target 11 (to conserve and protect 10% of coastal and marine areas through the establishment of a wellmanaged, ecologically representative and well-connected system of protected areas), DAERA have undertaken a programme of designations between 2013 and 2018 to establish an Marine Protected Area network. This now encompasses 48 Marine Protected Areas that provides protection for 38% of the Northern Ireland inshore region.

Presently 4.5% of these Marine Protected Areas are considered to be under favourable management, but as fisheries management measures are currently being developed, this figure should increase to approximately 19%, when the measures have been fully implemented.

Development of management plans has focused on Special Areas of Conservation , all underpinned by Areas of Special Scientific Interest, with a view to maintaining these/ bringing them back into favourable condition. Northern Ireland Environment Agency has recently a range of biological assessment to support the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for NI agri-environment scheme [Environmental Farming Scheme] which will also encompass a repeat of the Northern Ireland Countryside Survey.

UK biodiversity monitoring and surveillance

In 2019/20, Joint Nature Conservation Committee invested over £1 million in species surveys; in partnership with a range of NGOs and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. Joint Nature Conservation Committee's work allows government to produce trends for widespread birds, butterflies, bats, as well as composite indicators for the abundance and distribution of threatened species which are incorporated into UK and country indicators. The decline of insects in the wider countryside is of significant concern to the public and could have wider implications for our crop and wildflower pollination. Defra and the Devolved Administrations have recently come together to fund the development and roll out of a new Pollinator Monitoring Scheme.

- **Annex 2. Scottish Government Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee letter**

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[REDACTED]

20 December 2019

Dear Gillian

I am writing today to fulfil the commitment in our Programme for Government to write to your Committee, following publication of the global assessment of biodiversity by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), with an initial assessment of what that report means for Scotland. This was a substantial, complex task and I regret that has meant I was not able to write to you before recess.

Biodiversity is essential for sustaining the ecosystems that provide us with food, fibre, water, energy, medicines and other genetic materials. It is also important in regulating climate, pollution, water quality, pollination services, flood control, and storm surges; and has important social dimensions, including especially contributing to our physical and mental well-being. The protection of Scotland's biodiversity is a key priority for the Scottish Government and we are committed to doing more to protect and enhance our species and habitats.

On 6 May 2019, IPBES published its Global Assessment. The report identified an unprecedented decline in nature and accelerating rates of species extinction, with significant impacts on people around the world. It identified the grave impacts for people, through implications for economies, livelihoods, food security and quality of life. It characterised the current global response as insufficient but concluded that it is not too late to make a difference through transformative change. The links between climate change and biodiversity loss were clearly exemplified and the IPBES report mirrors findings in the UK Committee on Climate Change net zero report.

During First Minister's Questions on 9 May 2019, the First Minister welcomed the IPBES report and the evidence it provides, and said in response to a question from Claudia Beamish MSP:

'...We are already doing a great deal here in Scotland to address biodiversity loss through our biodiversity strategy. We will consider the report's findings carefully and we will look to ensure that our actions produce the transformative change that is needed. ...'

We recognise the additional work that all countries, including Scotland, have to do. We are committed... to carrying out a thorough analysis of what we are already doing, what more we need to do and what we need to do differently. By the end of this year, ministers will write to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee with their initial assessments on that.

I agree with the member about the importance of biodiversity; it is as important as the challenge on climate change and, as on climate change, I do not underestimate the difficulties, complexities and challenges. However, as on climate change, I—and, I am sure, all of us—want Scotland to be leading the way.'

The IPBES report on the global condition of biodiversity was followed on 4 October 2019 by the UK State of Nature report, including a separate Scottish report, and on 23 October by the UK Marine Assessment of Progress towards Good Environmental Status (GES). These together provide the clearest picture to-date of the status of biodiversity around the UK and in Scotland. They represent an agreed evidence base setting out the state of biodiversity across the UK, both terrestrial and marine. The State of Nature reports include Scottish Natural Heritage data and paint a picture of continuing biodiversity loss in Scotland, as in the rest of the UK, mirroring many of the findings of the IPBES Global Assessment.

In developing our initial analysis of the Global Assessment, we have looked at the potential actions and policy pathways highlighted in the report and, in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage, conducted a three-part analysis of our current and planned activities.

In large part, the purpose of the IPBES report is to inform the development of the international post-2020 framework for biodiversity which it is anticipated will be agreed at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in China in October 2020 (this will be COP15). It is this new framework which, in the same way as the 'Aichi' targets agreed at COP10 in 2010 influenced our 2020 biodiversity strategy, will inform Scotland's national post-2020 biodiversity strategy and plans.

We have used the process of conducting this initial analysis of the IPBES potential actions and policy pathways to inform our engagement in international biodiversity forums as we work towards hosting an international Thematic Workshop, in partnership with the CBD, in April 2020, and develop our approach to influencing the international post-2020 framework. This work has also provided a helpful backdrop to the development of a new programme approach to draw together our activity on biodiversity, both the work to deliver the current 2020 strategy and the forward-facing work for post-2020.

I have set out, in an Annex to this letter, a summary of our initial analysis. This starts with a high-level summary of the evidence in Scotland, addressing the impacts of exploitation on our species and habitats, on our terrestrial, marine and freshwater environments, the impacts of climate change, pollution and Invasive Non-Native

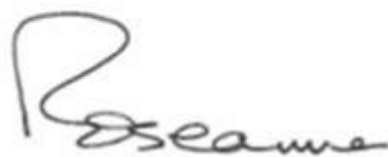
Species (INNS). The Annex then summarises what we are already doing, including the present legislative and funding context, and the final section provides an initial summary of areas where, in the context of developing our post-2020 approach, we need to do more and what we need to do differently.

Both the IPBES Global Assessment and the State of Nature Scotland report identify the main drivers of biodiversity loss as changes in land and sea use; direct exploitation of organisms; climate change; pollution; and invasive non-native species. These conclusions are very much in line with our own identification of the key pressures on biodiversity as set out in *Scotland's Biodiversity: A Route Map to 2020*.

While much of the summary of our analysis, like the IPBES and State of Nature reports, challenges us to do more for nature, it is also clear that the Six Big Steps for Nature identified in the Route Map remain relevant and that, as the international biodiversity community builds towards COP15 when the post-2020 framework will be agreed, a handbrake turn in our policy approach is not what is required. In addition to the important tasks of seeking to influence the post-2020 international framework and continuing to focus on delivering Scotland's 2020 biodiversity strategy, we will continue to work with partners across the public, private and third sectors to encourage the adoption of biodiversity-friendly practices and to seek to improve people's connection with, and understanding of the importance of, nature.

This is, of course, our initial assessment. Further work will be undertaken under our biodiversity programme as we build towards COP15 and I will be pleased to continue to engage with the Committee on these issues during 2020 which will be a significant year for biodiversity and the closely related issue of climate change.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roseanna', written in a cursive style.

Roseanna Cunningham

October 2020

