



**Hampshire &
Isle of Wight**
Wildlife Trust



General Election Guide 2024

We want leaders that stand up for nature!

Very soon, people across the UK will head to the polls to vote for their local MPs, and the next national government.

The importance of this election for nature cannot be overstated. The next parliament will be critical for nature's recovery. This means protecting and restoring 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 and reversing the decline in our wildlife.

We need ambitious leadership from our political representatives, and more importantly, we need **action** – not just words.

Our MPs have the power to act and help secure nature's recovery. They will have influence on key policies and laws that will directly impact our local communities and wildlife, including: setting national standards governing building and planning; efforts to tackle water pollution; future farming payments; investment in green spaces, and direct funding for nature recovery projects.

Turnout in the 2019 election across the UK was just 67.3%. With the margins in many local seats looking too close to call – every vote will count!

IMPORTANT NOTE!

Voters are required to present photo ID to vote at a polling station, under the Elections Act 2022. However, you do not need an ID to vote via post. Find a list of accepted voter ID [here](#). If you don't have an accepted form of ID you can apply for a free voter authority certificate [here](#).



Why does this election matter?

- We are now **just six years away from 2030**, the date by which we must legally halt nature's decline in the UK. We are not on track to achieve this, so the next 5-year term of government is the last chance.
- We are in a **nature and climate emergency**, with key species populations in freefall across the UK and in our region. We need urgent action now.
- MPs will be making big policy decisions that will impact our local area; from planning policy, to the future farming funding and water regulation.
- We need to ensure that nature's recovery is on local candidates' agendas.
- **We need local MPs leading the way**, championing key local environmental issues in parliament, so the next government will be pressured to act – and support the necessary solutions.
- General elections are a key opportunity to get public commitments from candidates, as they are competing for your vote.
- National elections are a key indicator for the government and opposition parties about what issues local people care about.

About the General Election

UK general elections are held to elect Members of Parliament (MPs) to the House of Commons, representing local constituencies across the whole of the UK. Elections must be held every five years, although they can be called earlier.

Political parties and candidates campaign in the lead up to the election, with the party winning the most seats in the House of Commons usually forming the government.

Recently a review of local constituency boundaries was held, meaning new seat boundaries will now apply at the next election. In our region, there are now 20 parliamentary constituencies, these are:

- Aldershot
- Basingstoke
- East Hampshire
- Eastleigh
- Fareham and Waterlooville
- Gosport
- Hamble Valley
- Havant
- Isle of Wight East [New – Isle of Wight split in two]
- Isle of Wight West [New – Isle of Wight split in two]
- New Forest East
- New Forest West
- North East Hampshire
- North West Hampshire
- Portsmouth North
- Portsmouth South
- Romsey and Southampton North
- Southampton Itchen
- Southampton Test
- Winchester

An interactive map of the new constituency boundaries is [here](#).

To find **the list of candidates you can vote for in your constituency**, look on ‘Who Can I Vote For’ [here](#).

What can I ask my candidates to do to help restore nature?

Elected MPs have the power to influence and shape national environmental policy through legislation in the UK – whether they are in government or not.

They can draft or propose laws, raise key local issues in parliament, ask for answers from government Ministers and officials, speak in – or organise – relevant debates on key issues. They can also be elected to Parliamentary Select Committees, which scrutinise specific areas of policy.

MPs engage with their local constituents and community organisations to understand the key issues and represent their concerns.

By championing environmental causes and supporting impactful policies, MPs have a crucial role to play in restoring nature - ensuring a healthier region for future generations.

Even before they are elected in the run up to the election, local candidates can influence and shape the debate; and with it, future policy.

By challenging their rivals on key issues and speaking up, they can ensure key concerns are recognised and must be factored-in to the next government's agenda.

You can ask your candidates to take action, make pledges or raise the profile of key issues you care about - that could be air or water pollution, pesticides, greenspaces or a damaging development in your area.

We've put together a few issues that we believe more policy action on is crucial if we are to save nature - feel free to use these when you contact your candidates!

To secure nature's recovery...

Our planning system needs to do more to help nature recover:

Through good planning, we know we can create communities that support both people and wildlife - by putting nature at the heart of development. This not only helps safeguard natural habitats, ensures clean water and air, and creates healthier, more desirable living spaces.

Poor-quality development harms nature and communities, but good planning protects wildlife and fosters recovery, by creating, connecting and expanding wild areas. Good design standards, ambitious policies and robust enforcement help improve community health, enhance climate resilience through flood management and urban cooling, and connect people to nature.

With significant pressures locally, we need development that gives back more than it takes away and actively supports a wilder, sustainable future.

Ask your candidate if they support:

- **Giving nature's recovery proper weight in the planning system** – Nature often loses out in planning, relative to other considerations. Too often, the focus is on quantity rather than quality. To change this, we need the law to be clear, so that our planning system consistently supports, and gives more weight to, our nature recovery goals.
- **Local nature recovery plans having real influence** – Local Authorities across England are producing local Nature Recovery Strategies because of the Environment Act. However, we need these to have clear, meaningful influence in planning and decision making if they are to make a real difference. Politicians must help to ensure these strategies provide a robust, spatial foundation for planning decisions, outlining where nature is and where it needs to be. The LNRS must be clearly connected to the mechanisms for delivery, such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), with clear targets and metrics for success built in – not just nice words.
- **More nature-friendly building standards and policies** – the national rules and policies governing new development must do more to enhance the local environment. Our policymakers must ensure all developments deliver at least 20% 'net gain' for nature, relative to what was there before, and these requirements must be tightened to prevent the misuse and abuse of exemptions. In addition, we need more national policies to consistently deliver nature-friendly development design, such as targets for tree canopy cover, requirements for swift and bee bricks, and measures to discourage artificial grass.
- **New 'Wild belt'** – We need a new planning designation, or 'wild belt', to help protect land intended to support nature's recovery from inappropriate development. This would go further than the existing 'green belt', which doesn't have any specific environmental-friendly management criteria attached. With new 'wild belt' areas across the country we could link up ribbons of protected land, and support nature's recovery at scale through effective 'green corridors'.

To secure nature's recovery...

We need urgent action to tackle the water pollution crisis:

Our rivers and waterways are in crisis. The South of England has over 85% of the world's chalk streams, making them one of the planet's rarest habitats. They provide a vital home to key species like water voles and brown trout. Likewise downstream, the Solent's unique seagrass meadows and chalk reefs host seahorses, thresher sharks, and cuttlefish.

These habitats, our 'crown jewels,' are threatened by pollution, climate change, and industrial pressures. Langstone Harbour in Havant saw over 400 pollution alerts in early 2024 alone, surpassing all of 2023. Even protected streams like the Test and Itchen face significant pollution. Solutions exist but need stronger support from national policy and policymakers.

Ask your candidate if they support:

- **Better protections for our Chalk Streams** - Only 11 out of the 220 British chalk streams have any legal protections as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and only 4 are protected as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). We need new, bespoke, and robust legal protections for all chalk streams, especially in planning.
- **Improved enforcement to tackle water pollution** - Cuts to enforcement agencies and environmental protection budgets over the past decade have left our rivers defenceless against polluters. We need environmental watchdogs to be empowered and sufficiently resourced to ensure they can monitor and inspect polluters and enforce penalties upon those who break the law.
- **Action to halve nutrient pollution by 2030** - Sewage, wastewater and agricultural runoff are all suffocating our rivers and the wildlife that depends on them. The public rightly want to see healthy, safe and clean rivers, lakes, wetlands and coasts. We need politicians to champion key, nature-based policy solutions. For example, investment and regulation to enable more rainwater to be retained naturally, rather than overwhelming the sewage system, and support for rewilding previously polluting agricultural land, as we have proven to be effective through our Solent nitrate reduction scheme.
- **More action to stop damage to Marine Protected Areas** - The UK's seas are being poisoned by sewage discharges and river pollution is draining into them on a daily basis. Even our protected areas at sea are being damaged by unsustainable development and destructive fishing methods such as bottom trawling. It must stop. We need policy support to ensure Marine Protected Areas are properly managed – with destructive practices banned and development avoided.

To secure nature's recovery...

We need a transition to nature-friendly, sustainable farming:

How we farm is crucial for food security and meeting the UK's nature and climate targets. With over 69% of the UK farmed and producing more than 50% of our food, land management impacts nature, climate, air, and water quality. The UK Food Security Report states that food security relies on effective, sustainable land use, not just maximizing production. To halt species loss by 2030, 40% of farms need nature-conscious management.

Nature and farming can coexist. The Lockerley Estate in East Tytherley has transitioned from conventional to regenerative farming, using techniques like direct drilling, reducing fuel use, and dedicating 28 hectares to wildlife through rewilding, low-intensity grazing, wildflower meadows, and wood pasture restoration. Nature-friendly farming benefits people, the planet, and the rural economy, creating jobs in agroforestry, natural capital advice, and local marketing.

Ask your candidate if they support:

- **Increasing the budget for wildlife-friendly farming** - To reverse the decline of nature by 2030, and secure the UK's long term food security, the budget to support wildlife-friendly farming should be increased to at least £4.4 billion a year and be linked to Local Nature Recovery Strategy Priorities. This will ensure the agricultural transition is fair to farmers and better for wildlife, while providing healthier and more affordable food for all members of society.
- **Committing to halve pesticide use** - The catastrophic decline of insects is having a huge effect on the rest of the natural world. Insects are the canaries in the coal mine - their collapse is an alarm bell that must not be ignored. To save the future of insects - and all life that depends on them - the next UK Government must halve pesticide use by 2030 and maintain all bans on of bee-killing and human-health-harming neonicotinoids once and for all.
- **Reducing nitrate pollution and agrochemical use** - If we are to tackle water pollution, and deliver the food we need, we need to champion smart, sustainable ways to reduce the reliance on chemicals. We need policy support for buffer strips along waterways, integrated natural pest management techniques, regenerative cropping methods and regional nutrient neutrality credit schemes. Innovative, sustainable solutions - championed through policy - can not only enhance biodiversity but also improve soil health and water quality, ensuring a resilient agricultural system for future generations.
- **More help for farmers reduce emissions and adapt to climate change** - The extreme heat, wildfires, and droughts in 2022 provided a taste of the reality to come. Farmers need much more support to adapt to climate change and to help meet the UK's climate goals, as well as reducing their emissions. Adaptation and mitigation need to be embedded in farm payment schemes; farmers need better information about how farming with nature can increase their resilience; and a land use strategy is needed that considers how food production needs to change in the UK in response to climate change.

To secure nature's recovery...

We need more support for greener communities :

We've seen how communities can transform even densely populated cities like Portsmouth into wildlife havens. Projects like converting flytipping sites into community orchards, restoring highstreet flower beds, and creating 'wilder streets' with swift boxes, hedgehog highways, and pollinator patches show the power of collective action. These initiatives foster safer, united communities connected to nature, benefiting mental and physical health.

Research shows that nature access can save the NHS £2.1 billion annually in treatment costs. Outdoor learning improves children's mental health and environmental appreciation, as well as supporting academic attainment.

However, over a third of England's population lacks nearby green spaces, with Portsmouth averaging only 10.8m² per person. Improving access to nature-rich areas where we live, learn, and work will transform lives. We need national policies to empower local communities to enhance their areas and deliver nature's benefits to everyone.

Ask your candidates if they support:

- **Reducing barriers and investing in community conservation action** – Local authorities and other agencies, such as highways, should be expected to work alongside communities to address inequalities in access and drive improvements to natural spaces in their local area, including supporting and enabling groups of local people to take practical action to enhance and expand green spaces for wildlife and people to enjoy. Statutory guidance for community engagement and nature-positive management of the public estate, would support all relevant parties to collaborate and play their part in nature's recovery.
- **A natural health service** - nature can play a critical role to play in boosting our national health and wellbeing. We believe green social prescribing must be integrated into health and social care services and community organisations working to support mental and physical health should be given the tools and training to embed nature in their practice. It makes economic sense and has the potential to deliver positive outcomes at scale.
- **Wilder Schools** - New statutory guidance to deliver learning outdoors for all would ensure our schools support happier, more confident children who understand their impact on our natural world. All formal educational settings should be enabled to provide opportunities for connection to nature as well as guiding greater understanding of the challenges facing nature and the climate. Training and support should be available for existing and future teachers to build confidence and skills in integrating nature into the curriculum and embedding pro-environmental action within the fabric of the school.
- **More investment and policy to deliver greener neighbourhoods** – We need more investment in accessible green natural spaces for everyone. The creation of appropriate, high-quality green infrastructure close to where people live has multiple benefits. Not only can this green space offer valuable habitat in its own right, it also helps to reduce recreational pressure on sensitive wildlife-rich sites, and can play a role in building resilience to climate impacts, such as significantly cooling urban areas. We need the next government to encourage more urban greening through planning policy and targeted support, such as the pocket parks fund, to help deliver more trees and shading for our towns and cities.

To secure nature's recovery...

We need investment in nature-based climate solutions:

Our changing climate risks significantly impacting our local economy, nature, and communities. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight will face hotter, drier summers with up to a 60% reduction in rainfall. Over 20 Hampshire neighbourhoods, including Test Valley and Rushmoor, are noted as particularly vulnerable to extreme heat. Predicted sea level rise of around 30 cm by 2040 and increased winter rainfall (of up to 35% by 2080) will lead to more frequent and costly floods, as well as erosion - affecting areas like Farlington Marshes, Portsmouth, Winchester, and Romsey.

Nature-based solutions offer a win-win solution, by protecting and restoring habitats which can store carbon and help us adapt to climate impacts. Healthy ecosystems like forests and wetlands act as natural buffers against extreme weather, safeguarding lives, homes, crops, water supplies, and infrastructure.

Ask your candidates if they support:

- **More natural habitats to help stop flooding** - Floodplains are invaluable for natural flood prevention, retaining up to five times more water than improved grasslands. The loss of floodplain connections, as seen with the Rivers Test and Itchen, contributed to the 2014 floods. Restoring healthy floodplains can reduce soil erosion, pollution, and severe flooding. Our careful management at Winnall Moors reserve, for example, has helped to safeguard residential and retail areas from flooding in Winchester. Additionally, we need to prioritize natural coastal defences, to protect vital sites and communities from sea-level rise. The next government must ramp up investment to help address both inland and coastal flood risk and erosion. The total value of the flood risk reduction and other benefits arising from natural flood management has been proven to substantially outweigh the outlay. We need natural flood management as part of a long-term plan to mitigate climate impacts and protect existing habitats and communities.
- **Creating a National Habitat Restoration Fund** - Grasslands and wildflower meadows are vital for nature and carbon storage. Our reserves, like St Catherine's Hill and Arreton Down, are species-rich grasslands that absorb CO2 and provide habitats for wildlife. However, nature recovery funds have been insufficient and short-term. We need the next government to commit to a National Habitat Restoration Fund of at least £5 billion over the next parliament to restore habitats and combat climate change.
- **Protect our Blue Carbon** - The marine environment has a huge role to play in locking up and storing carbon. Destroying these 'Blue Carbon' sources risks accelerating climate change, and could make Net Zero unachievable. It is essential that these important stores of Blue Carbon are recognised, monitored, and protected from damaging development and activities. However, protection alone is not enough. We need active restoration of blue carbon habitats, like the work we are doing through the Solent Seascape Project and our seagrass restoration programme. The next government should commit to replenish and increase the £650 million Nature (natural solutions) for Climate Fund, due to expire in 2025, and ensure it supports blue-carbon solutions like seagrass restoration.

How can I make sure nature has a voice in the elections?

1. Tweet your council candidates

Many local candidates will be campaigning on X (formerly Twitter), so why not ask them directly how they intend to show they truly care about saving nature? Don't worry if your local candidates are not on X, there are plenty more actions you can take below!

@[CANDIDATE'S HANDLE] Nature is declining locally and globally, and we need to take immediate action to ensure nature's recovery. If elected, how will you tackle the nature emergency? #Generalelection2024

@[CANDIDATE'S HANDLE] Our precious rivers and waterways are in crisis. We need to prevent pollution and bring back wildlife. If elected, will you commit to cleaning up rivers for people & nature? #Generalelection2024 #SaveOurChalkStreams

@[Candidate's Handle], will you commit to reforming the planning system to make it more nature-friendly and sustainable? Do you agree our habitats need better protection and new developments should contribute to environmental recovery.? #Generalelection2024

@[Candidate's Handle], can we count on you to support policies for nature-friendly farming? Sustainable food production and regenerative farming methods are crucial for biodiversity, soil health, and climate resilience. #Generalelection2024

2. Write to your prospective parliamentary candidates

Writing to your parliamentary candidates is a good way of communicating your priorities as a community member, and a voter, to ensure the matters you care about are taken seriously by your local candidates.

You can use our template below to write to your local candidates to ask them how they will take action for nature's recovery.

It's worth noting that the best and most effective emails are always the personal ones, so try to add in some reasons why you want your councillors to take action locally, and perhaps a few examples locally of what needs to improve.

The latest candidate list can be found [here](#).

Dear [INSERT CANDIDATE NAME HERE],

As a candidate in the upcoming election, I am writing to you to ask how you plan to support nature's recovery if elected as my MP.

I am greatly concerned about the decline of nature in my community, and the state of rivers locally.

[INSERT WHY NATURE AND CLEAN RIVERS ARE IMPORTANT FOR YOU]

The next 5-year period of Government will be critical if we are to achieve our legal target to halt nature's decline in the UK by 2030. Nature's recovery is likewise vital for tackling the climate crisis, and nature underpins a healthy, thriving society and economy.

Locally, our area is renowned for its world-famous chalk streams. Their crystal-clear waters are home for salmon, water voles, white-clawed crayfish and kingfishers, making them our equivalent to the Great Barrier Reef or the Amazon Rainforest. Now they are under threat from sewage, agricultural and chemical pollution and over abstraction.

Our area also is subject to significant levels of development. We know good development and planning can deliver high quality homes, as well as help nature. But our current planning system is not consistently delivering the kind of outcomes we need if we are to restore nature, and deliver truly sustainable development in the right places.

If elected, you will have a vital role to play in helping restore and protect our cherished local nature. As a possible constituent, this is of critical importance to me when considering who to vote for.

Therefore, I am writing to ask what your plans are help nature recover in our local community, and through national policy. I would be keen to hear of your plans and approach in the following areas:

Reforming the Planning System:

- Development must be more nature-friendly and sustainable. Our planning system needs reform to better protect critical habitats, nature-networks and natural resources, ensuring new developments contribute positively to environmental recovery.

Supporting Nature-Friendly Farming:

- Policies are needed to help fund more sustainable food production, regenerative farming methods that support biodiversity, soil health, and climate resilience.

Tackling Water Pollution:

- Clean water is essential for wildlife and people. We need stricter regulations, enforcement and better management of pollutants to protect our rivers and seas, especially our vulnerable chalk streams.

Supporting Greener Communities:

- Urban and rural greenspaces are vital for wildlife and human well-being. We need policymakers to empower communities to care for local nature, enhancing health and resilience to climate impacts.

Prioritising Nature-Based Solutions to Climate Change:

- Natural solutions like reforestation and wetland creation can combat climate change and boost biodiversity, acting as buffers against extreme weather and protecting infrastructure. Ambitious policy and national funding are crucial for implementing these initiatives effectively at a meaningful scale.

These areas require urgent and sustained attention. Therefore, I kindly ask if you will commit to supporting more ambitious policies, increased funding, and stricter enforcement to address these critical environmental issues. Your leadership on these matters would be crucial, for the health and well-being of our community and natural environment.

I look forward to your response and hope to see a strong commitment to nature's recovery.

Kind regards,

[INSERT YOUR NAME HERE] [INSERT ADDRESS AND POSTCODE]

3. Meet your local constituency candidates

Meeting your local candidates is a good way to understand their priorities and identify how committed they are to acting on the climate and ecological emergencies. We recommend contacting a candidate from each major political party who is standing in your constituency and asking them for an online meeting. Many candidates will also be going door to door to get support. You could also use this as an opportunity to ask some questions.

Spend some time researching the candidate online to understand more about who they are and what they stand for and think through how you might tailor the conversation to the candidate's interests.

If you would like to meet with your local candidates, you can use the letter template above and insert the following: *"I would like the opportunity to hear how you intend to prioritise action for nature's recovery. I'd be grateful if you would please advise me of your availability for a meeting."*

Questions for Candidates

Critical questions to put to your local constituency candidate

- How are you going to reverse the continuing decline in wildlife?
- How will you make sure that development gives back more to nature than it takes away?
- What is your plan to tackle the pollution in our local rivers and seas?
- Will you champion our chalk streams and advocate for greater legal protections?
- What measures would you take to increase nature-friendly farming?
- What actions will you take on the climate emergency?
- How are you planning to make sure everyone in your constituency is able to enjoy nature locally?
- How will you help empower our communities to connect with and care for local nature?

4. Ask a question at a Hustings

A hustings is a nonpartisan event bringing together electoral candidates in the run up to an election. It's an opportunity for voters to hear the views of candidates on a range of issues and in turn, voters can raise issues that matter to them by asking questions during the event.

They usually feature candidates from all major parties, are most frequently organised by local organisations or community groups and held in the ward where the candidates are **standing for election**.

How to find a hustings near you?

Some places you can find where hustings will be advertised include:

- Local hustings may be registered with Democracy Club:
<https://democracyclub.org.uk/>
- Local newspapers and newspaper websites
- Local Libraries and community noticeboards
- Social media pages and the websites of the candidates
- Ask people on a local social media group if they know of any hustings
- Search online the words "hustings" and the name of your consistency

Once you have found a hustings near you, you can submit a question to ask the candidates. **See our suggested questions above.**

5. Organise a hustings

Can't find a Hustings near you? Why not organise one?

Hustings can cover a whole range of topics or be specific about a particular issue e.g. the climate and ecological crisis.

If you are interested in hosting a hustings, [Friends of the Earth](#) and [The Electoral Commission](#) have useful online guides for organising hustings during local elections and how to ensure it is nonpartisan and fair event for all candidates.

Please also get in touch with us, as we may be able to support you.

6. Vote for the candidates that stand up for nature

On Thursday 4th July 2024, you can vote for the candidates who will represent you in parliament. **Please vote with nature in mind!**

Your polling station address should be printed on your polling card, which is delivered by post before an election.

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Find a list of accepted voter ID [here](#).

If you don't have an accepted form of ID you can apply for a free voter authority certificate [here](#)

Want to make a difference for nature locally?

Join our Wilder Campaign Leaders programme!

Our Campaign Leader programme is designed to give you the skills and confidence to push for change to protect the nature locally. We will provide advice and training through our dedicated platform so you can develop the most effective techniques and tools to start your own campaign. You'll have exclusive access to our campaigns team to get information and advice on campaigning and influencing.

Our Campaign Leader Programme can help you build the skills, confidence and experience needed to become a powerful advocate for the natural world. [Find out more.](#)

Appendix: Nature Cheat Sheet

Need some convincing stats or ammunition for a discussion?

Here are some quick, easy and hard-hitting facts to get you started on talking about the nature emergency. These can be a great addition to any email or have to hand when attending a hustings. Knowing facts and stats about the decline of nature locally and nationally can help you build confidence when speaking with a local candidate and help you to back up the issues with evidence.

Evidence nature is in crisis

- The UK has become one of the most nature depleted nations in the world, with over 15% of species now at risk of extinction.
- Nationally, since 1970 more than 41% of species have decreased in population.
- 48% of Hampshire's 50 most 'notable species' are in decline such as Nightingales, Turtle Doves, Great Crested Newts and Duke of Burgundy Butterflies.
- 20% of Hampshire's insect and pollinator species are classed as rare, threatened or declining.
- 19 of the 46 butterfly species found in Hampshire are declining.
- Nightingale populations have declined by 78% in Hampshire and 33% on the Isle of Wight since 2012
- Between 1986 and 2012 we have seen significant declines in many farmland bird species in Hampshire, including, Skylark (-14%), Starling (-19%), Linnet (-21%), Yellowhammer (-27%), Bunting (-36%), Lapwing (-47%), Turtle Dove (-75%), Grey Partridge (-79%), Corn Bunting (-80%), Tree Sparrow (-100%) and Yellow Wagtail (-100%).

What is causing nature's decline?

- The main causes of biodiversity loss in the UK are: agricultural management, climate change, urbanisation, pollution, woodland management, fisheries, invasive and non-native species and freshwater management.
- In Hampshire, decades of nitrate pollution from wastewater, urban runoff and agricultural discharges have caused the Solent to reach crisis point. The high input levels of nitrogen and phosphorus to the Solent's water environment are causing eutrophication.
- 62% of river stretches failed because of activities attributed to agriculture & rural land management (pollution from fertiliser or livestock).
- 54% of river stretches failed because of activities attributed to the water industry (including treated and untreated sewage discharge, and abstraction of groundwater).
- 26% of river stretches failed because of activities attributed to the urban and transport sector.
- Nature's recovery is vital for tackling climate change, research suggests that nature-based solutions such as rewilding and restoring damaged ecosystems, can provide over one-third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed between now and 2030 under the Paris Agreement.

Nature and the economy

- Protecting and restoring nature is the essential foundation of a strong, stable economy. Nature is not an impediment to UK economic growth: it's vital to it.
- Over half of global GDP (\$44 trillion) depends directly on nature and its services.
- Damage to the natural environment is already slowing the UK economy, and could lead to an estimated 12% reduction to GDP by the 2030s – greater than the impact of the global financial crisis or Covid-19.
- The global costs arising from environmental damage are already around \$7tn per year and will double in a decade.
- 13 of the 18 sectors that made up the FTSE 100 in 2018 had processes highly dependent on natural capital (such as food and water), equivalent to almost three-quarters of the FTSE 100's market capitalisation.
- The UK's stock of natural capital assets upon which these benefits are based were estimated in 2019 to be worth £1.2tn.
- Globally, the services provided by ecosystems sustain benefits worth an estimated \$125tn a year – more than one-and-a-half times the size of global GDP.
- Creating 100,000 hectares of wetland upstream of major towns and cities can yield a benefits-to-costs ratio of up to 9:1.
- Green businesses and jobs are booming – in stark contrast to the national economy. A report has found that the UK's net zero economy grew by 9% in 2023 in comparison to 0.1% growth for the economy overall.

Water

- Every river in England is polluted. All of England's waters fail chemical status tests and are not expected to meet standards until 2063.
- Only 15% of rivers meet good ecological health status.
- In 2019, every single river assessed in England failed the chemical health standards.
- In 2023 untreated sewage was discharged for a total of 3.6 million hours through storm overflows – more than double what it was in 2022.
- In England, 2023 was the worst year for sewage discharges since monitoring began.
- British Atlantic Salmon populations have declined by 30-50% since 2006 and are projected to decline by 50-80% between 2010-2025.
- IUCN Classifies Atlantic Salmon in Great Britain as Endangered.
- The River Loddon has one of the highest phosphate concentrations of all rivers surveyed nationally.
- Friends of the Itchen Estuary found that samples taken from the River Itchen had E. coli levels more than ten times higher than a "satisfactory" level.

Appendix: Nature Cheat Sheet

Nature, a changing climate, health, and wellbeing

- Portsmouth and Southampton are both high on the green space deprivation index. In Southampton, 14 of the 32 neighbourhoods are rated as 'E' - the category most lacking in green space. While Portsmouth has a similar proportion, 12 out of 25 neighbourhoods.
- A BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) person is more than twice as likely as a white person to live within an area deprived of green space (rated E).
- For every £1 spent on green spaces in England an estimated £7 in additional value for health and wellbeing and the environment is generated.
- Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing.
- Providing access to greenspace within 15 minutes' walk of home, particularly in economically deprived areas, would save the NHS £2.1 billion
- Between 1962 and 2008 the sea level at Portsmouth has risen by 132mm – an average of 2.9mm per year.
- More than one third of the population - nearly 9.5 million households in England – are unable to access green places near their home.
- In Portsmouth, the average public green space is only 10.8m² per person.
- Hampshire and the Isle of Wight will suffer from hotter, drier summers; with a 20–60% reduction in summer rainfall.
- Within Hampshire alone, more than 20 neighbourhoods have been identified as particularly vulnerable to extreme heat, including 5 in Test Valley and 7 in Rushmoor.
- In addition, predicted sea level rise of around 30 cm by 2040 and increased winter rainfall (of up to 35% by 2080) will lead to more frequent and costly flooding events; such as those seen at Farlington Marshes and across the Portsmouth coast as well as inland in Winchester and Romsey in recent years .

Transitioning towards more Nature-friendly farming

- Over 70% of the UK's land is farmed in some way – how this land is managed has a big impact on wildlife.
- In the UK between 1970 and 2020, farmland birds have declined on average by 58%.
- Agriculture accounts for 11% of UK greenhouse gas emissions.
- soil degradation has been calculated to cost the economy £1.2 billion every year across England and Wales.
- Climate change is already impacting agriculture. The long, sweltering summer of 2023, the warmest on record, saw onion yields down 40%, carrot yields down 25% and potato yields down 20%. £8bn of UK food imports are also threatened by worsening floods, droughts and heatwaves.
- Around 40% of farms will need to be in higher ambition environmental schemes to halt the loss of species abundance by 2030.
- More nature-friendly policies have been shown to generate new, lucrative economic opportunities. New employment opportunities, from agroforestry and natural capital advice to new local marketing could create 10,000 jobs in the short-term and a further 15,000 in the long-term, and place the UK Government on track to meet key climate, biodiversity, tree planting, sustainable farming and wellbeing targets.
- More local and regional sustainable food systems, which can better support farmers, could create ~200,000 more jobs according to work by the RSPB and Sustain.
- Across the 165 farm businesses studied, moving towards a farm system based on Maximum Sustainable Output (MSO) was modelled to result in an average increase of between 10–45% in commercial returns across the different farm types, alongside a reduction of artificial inputs to zero.
- The National Food Strategy sets out how to achieve 30 by 30 and transition our food system, this includes behaviour change and what/how much we eat. The Food Strategy and the CCC both say that 20% of the least productive farmland could be rewilded with no impact on food security if eating habits change.

WILDER



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