

NATURE + NATIONAL SECURITY BILL



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WHY WE NEED A NATURE + NATIONAL SECURITY ACT

- **Nature breakdown is driving food insecurity and increasing household bills.**
- **UK communities are at risk from worsening climate impacts.**
- **Unpreparedness increases pressure on key public services like the NHS.**
- **The UK can put resilience at the heart of its mission and restore nature to protect its citizens and communities.**
- **We must recognise and designate critical ecosystems as national infrastructure.**
- **A Nature + National Security Act would protect communities while strengthening national resilience, creating a new Strategic Nature Network, made up of these critical ecosystems.**
- **The Strategic Nature Network would be formally recognised as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and delivery would be driven by a Resilience and Adaptation Commissioner.**
- **A National Nature Jobs Strategy will grow a broad spectrum of skilled, future-proof employment.**
- **The UK's existing laws, plans and targets will be aligned to deliver international obligations.**

We are at a fragile point in history. National security is at the forefront of everyone's minds and the instability of geopolitics is forcing us to think about the resilience of our economies, communities and overall security.

But there has been a more silent threat growing in the background: the crumbling of our biodiversity and climate. Both play a fundamental role in keeping the public safe, and both are beginning to fail, leaving the UK dangerously exposed. Yet, in the face of these threats, there is a clear path to a better future waiting to be seized. A future where we support our natural capital - the places that make Britain so special - to thrive and deliver better health, stronger communities, and a more resilient economy for everyone.

Nature Breakdown Is Driving Food Insecurity and Rising Bills

The Joint Intelligence Committee, tasked with warning us of the greatest threats we face, published a [report](#) stating every critical ecosystem that the UK relies **on is now on a path to collapse**. Their warning? This will lead to more conflict, food insecurity, displacement of people, and global instability.

The breakdown of ecosystems is already impacting our supply chains, driving resource competition and higher prices, and leaving the UK increasingly vulnerable - especially with its current high level of food imports. The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) [reported](#) that climate change and habitat loss are undermining Britain's food security so much that it could be **“at strategic risk of catastrophic failure”** as early as 2030. We already have around seven million adults experiencing food insecurity today in the UK; and this alarming warning is just four years away.



And we are already feeling the impacts. England has had three of the five worst harvests on record since 2020. And in 2022-23, climate impacts, like floods and droughts, were [found](#) to have **added over £350 to the average annual food bill**. A more strategic approach to restoring and connecting ecosystems would act as a natural buffer that can protect communities from extreme weather and, in turn, from volatile prices. We know how crucial this is, as these price shocks are proven to have a disproportionate impact on working families, and have serious consequences for millions of people's ability to access affordable and nutritional food. Rebuilding nature isn't just environmental policy, it's just as much about defence, health, social, housing, and welfare – we have just failed to recognise its value properly.

UK communities are at risk from worsening climate impacts

It's not just our food system that will be deeply affected by more extreme weather, it's our homes too. The latest assessment is that there are [6.3 million properties at risk of flooding](#), and shockingly, [30% of all new homes built in the last three years are at risk](#). We now have communities in the UK that flood year-on-year and homes that can no longer be insured.



The people on the front line are warning us that we are sleepwalking into this crisis. The National Fire Chiefs Council have [said](#) their **“capacity to keep communities safe and protect infrastructure is at risk.”**



Unpreparedness threatens public health, increasing pressure on the NHS

The Royal College of Physicians [stated](#) that **“the NHS is simply not prepared”** for the health impacts of climate change. We already know that extreme temperature is [already costing our NHS £3bn a year](#), taking vital funding away from other urgent areas - imagine what will happen as this gets worse.

Ecosystems have a massive role to play in building a healthier Britain, in fact, they already do. [ONS data shows](#) outdoor recreation resulted in between £6.2 to £8.4 billion of health benefits in 2020 alone. Alongside expanding, maintaining, and restoring a network of the UK's ecosystems, we also have the opportunity to ensure communities have better access to functional environments that improve their mental and physical wellbeing - and address the long standing equity issues surrounding access to British nature.

We do have laws that enable us to respond to this crisis, we need more to drive action and shift the dial.

Our National Adaptation Programmes **are not working** as they should have, with the Climate Change Committee not only finding our preparations for climate change **inadequate**, but being unable to show a single outcome of adaptation delivery as ‘good’.

The UK is facing profound risks from biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse that could cascade into a crisis we cannot afford. And yet the UK is dangerously off track from restoring nature in line with our international commitment to conserve and manage 30% of land and sea by 2030. But we do have the opportunity to act. If we respond like we would to any other national security threat, we can secure more affordable food, safer homes, and stronger health. **That's a future for Britain everyone can support - and why we need a Nature + National Security Bill.**

OUR OPPORTUNITY

We stand at a crossroads. We can stick with the status quo and watch as our food systems, homes, and safety all crumble around us, or we can use this moment to build a fairer, more resilient and prosperous Britain.

In a destabilised world, the UK can put resilience at the heart of its mission and restore nature to protect its citizens and communities. We know that just like our roads, energy and water networks, ecosystems provide a vital service. They ensure landscapes can regulate water storage, reduce flood risk, lessen the impact of storms, protect us from heat and enable soils to grow food.

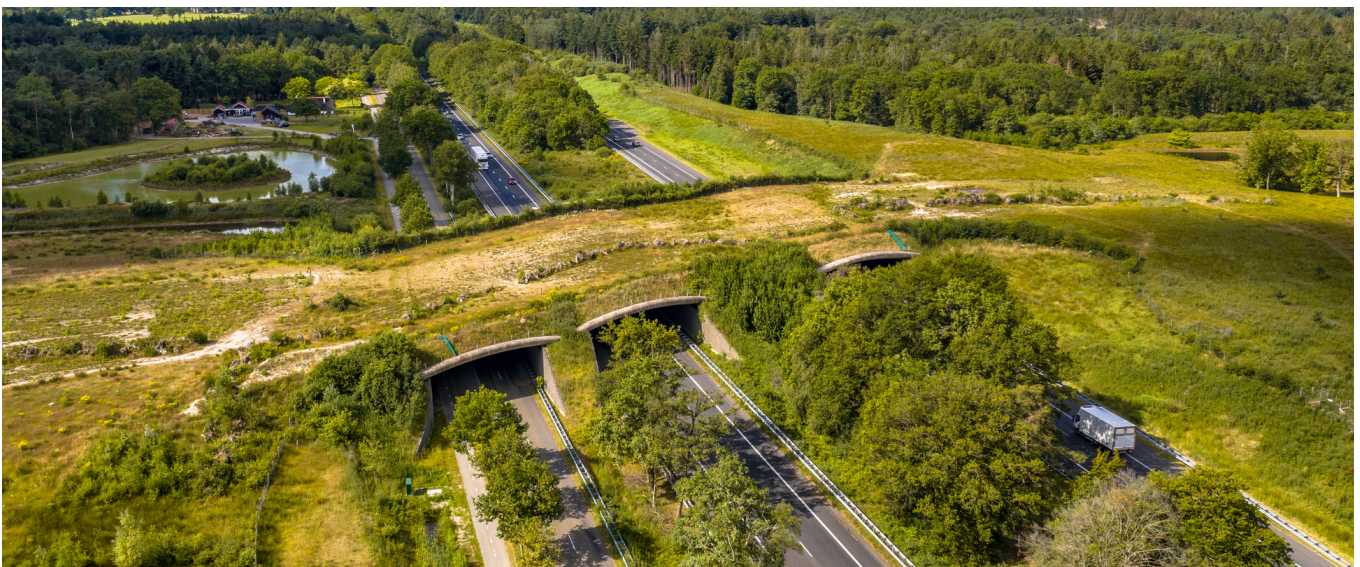
Ecosystems provide us with so many benefits, but as the [Dasgupta Review](#) made clear, while nature is our most precious asset, it has been taken for granted. If we **designate these critical ecosystems as national infrastructure**, like our other key networks, we can restore, connect and maintain them to ensure they can continue to underpin our security.

Establishing a strategic nature network as infrastructure would reflect the



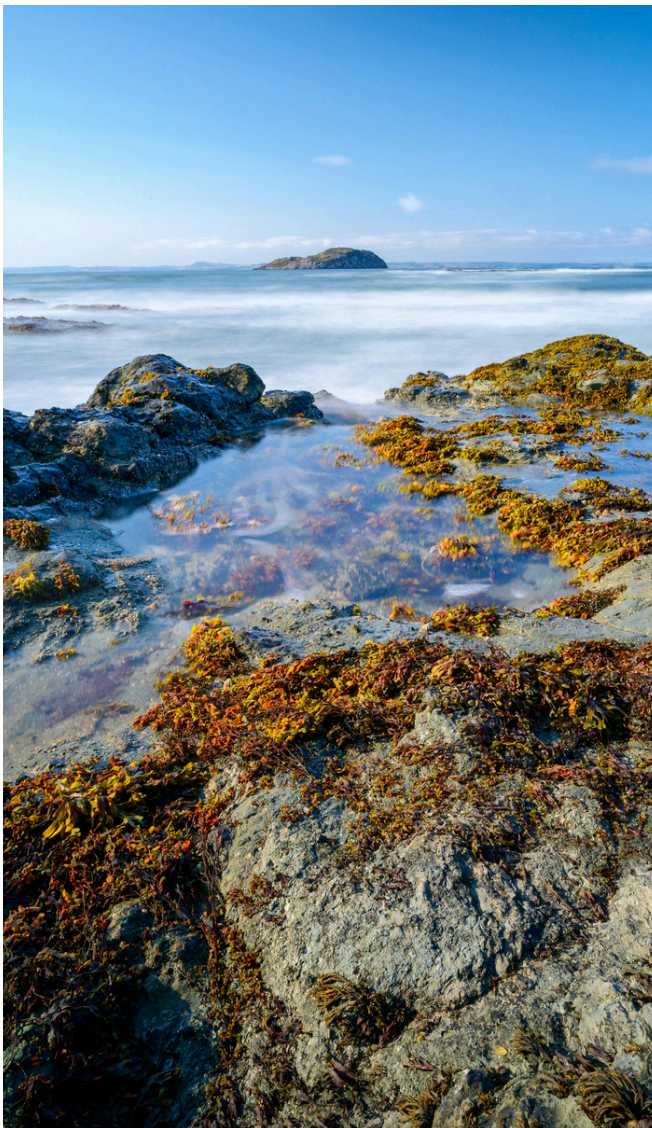
economy-wide risks of ecosystems failing and give nature the same priority as the UK's other critical infrastructure. Embedding natural capital within our infrastructure strategies and fiscal frameworks would help manage systemic risk to the UK, direct capital away from investments that increase environmental damage, and provide ecosystems with the necessary expertise and funding in government decisions to build a more resilient economy and country.

A fragmented approach, where we protect and restore nature in isolation or with uncoordinated interventions, will not work. It fails to recognise how ecosystems actually



function and allows them to continue to decline. Yet, **if the UK adopts an approach that focuses on the connectivity of landscapes and seascapes, it ensures that the natural processes that underpin our safety, and very existence, can thrive.** These are the foundations of Britain's security and we now have the chance to protect them for generations to come.

Storms, floods, drought and wildfires are not going away. In fact, as the Met Office [says](#), they are only going to get worse. A more strategic approach to nature restoration can help us prepare for these growing threats, but adaptation and resilience must also become priorities across every government department, with our existing laws used effectively.



Just as we have a Children’s Commissioner to ensure children’s voices are represented in decision making and legislation, we have the opportunity to adopt a similar approach for climate adaptation and national resilience – ensuring community safety is properly considered across government and driving more effective, joined-up action between departments.

This approach is a huge chance for the UK to not only save money, but also unlock large-scale investment in nature as infrastructure, accelerate cross-government delivery of environmental targets, safeguard communities through resilience and food security, improve public health, and create good, future-fit jobs. This is how we secure Britain’s future.

A NATURE + NATIONAL SECURITY ACT

A Nature and National Security Act would help prepare the UK for the escalating risks of biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate impacts – protecting communities while strengthening national resilience.

The Act would create a new Strategic Nature Network, building on existing restoration sites to connect and restore ecosystems at the scale needed to meet the UK's international commitments.

Designated as critical infrastructure, this network would help secure affordable food, protect homes from flooding and extreme heat, and improve public health. It would also establish a Resilience and Adaptation Commissioner to drive action across government and ensure communities are properly protected from the growing impacts of climate and nature breakdown.

The key provisions of the Nature and National Security Act are:

1. STRATEGIC NATURE NETWORK

to restore, connect and maintain a network of key ecosystems that will strengthen national security, protect communities and build resilience across the UK.

2. NATURE AS INFRASTRUCTURE

Nature as infrastructure—formally recognising nature as infrastructure, and recognising the Strategic Nature Network as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project would designate it as infrastructure of national importance. Decision-making would be streamlined at a national level to speed up, coordinate and strengthen delivery, while prioritising the network would help unlock long-term investment and national capacity.

3. NATIONAL NATURE JOBS STRATEGY

National Nature Jobs Strategy to grow a broad spectrum of skilled, future-proof employment while boosting the UK economy.

4. ALIGN AND DELIVER THE UK'S EXISTING LAWS, PLANS AND TARGETS

to ensure that the Land Use Framework, Environment Improvement Plan and other strategies are working together and are delivered in order to meet our international commitments.

5. RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION COMMISSIONER

to drive delivery on adaptation across government and hold those in power accountable for protecting communities from extreme weather, food insecurity and worsening health caused by climate and nature breakdown.

A STRATEGIC NATURE NETWORK

In 2009, the Government commissioned the [Lawton Review](#), which summarised how to improve the resilience and coherence of our ecological network as: **more, bigger, better and joined**. We must adopt an approach to nature restoration that's grounded in these principles. This would ensure that the UK can finally make progress towards its nature targets and commitments.

Creating a Strategic Nature Network and designating it as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project recognises the importance of building a nature system that can act as the bedrock of the UK's national security.

Just like our roads, energy and water systems, nature and ecosystems need to be connected, managed and maintained in order to function and play their critical role:

flood management, water storage to limit drought, climate regulation, purifying water, growing food, and strengthening physical and mental health.

Treating nature as infrastructure is not new. The [Netherlands](#) has already adopted a 'building with nature' approach where nature-based solutions and green infrastructure are being embedded into planning to address water and climate challenges and future-proof their economy.

Giving the SNN Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project status would ensure it receives the priority, funding and project management expertise needed to safeguard the ecosystem services we rely on. It would allow us to develop this network in tandem with other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.



“England’s collection of wildlife sites are generally too small and too isolated, leading to declines in many of England’s characteristic species. With climate change, the situation is likely to get worse. This is bad news for wildlife but also bad news for us.”

Professor Sir John Lawton



“The Strategic Nature Network provides the mechanism through which existing effort can be connected, public funding and private capital can be mobilised, and nature can be recognised and maintained as the critical national infrastructure upon which future prosperity depends. The launch of the Strategic Nature Network Vision by Rebuilding Nature on 5 June marks an important moment in how the UK can understand, value and invest in nature. The answer is already in front of us, we now need policy to align.”

Stephen Elderkin, Co-Founder Rebuilding Nature



We are making progress to improve wildlife connectivity, such as the Department of Transport’s [plan](#) to use its land around roads and railways for green bridges, but this action remains fragmented and often isolated. The movement, spread and interaction of species supports the complex processes that keep ecosystems functioning. To be effective, we need a master plan in order to deliver over a much greater scale and in an integrated way.

Designating nature as infrastructure, through a network of our key ecosystems, would give businesses the confidence to invest, unlocking significant private finance in nature markets, while ensuring that existing spending is being used as effectively as possible. The delivery of the SNN would be supported by a Nature Jobs Strategy to make sure the UK seizes the economic opportunity of building a more resilient country.

Just like the clean energy mission, a strategic and joined-up approach to nature restoration would create good, future-proof jobs - many of them resilient to automation. Green jobs have [grown](#) by 27.8% since 2015 and have [shown](#) strong resilience even during periods of wider market contraction. A renewed approach that treats nature as the foundation of the UK’s national security would require jobs that span a wide range of occupations, skills levels, and regions to succeed. Placing a Nature Jobs Strategy at the centre of the Nature + National Security Bill would provide the clarity and certainty needed for companies, government agencies and delivery partners to plan and mobilise the workforce we will need. This would build on the existing work already taking place to develop a new generation of clean energy workers, with the skills reforms well placed to support the growth of nature related jobs alongside the energy transition.

A RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION COMMISSIONER

In 2008, the UK passed the monumental Climate Change Act, and redefined what global action looks like. As part of the Act, the UK had to set 5-year 'budgets' to bring down emissions, alongside 5-year plans to adapt to the 'baked-in' impacts of climate change. That means making sure our rail networks can deal with more extreme temperatures, or that the homes we build are protected from extreme weather like flooding. While we have made real progress in bringing down emissions since then; it's a different story for adaptation.

Despite now being on our third National Adaptation Programme, repeated advice from the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, and ongoing warnings from the Climate Change Committee, there is not a single outcome that is measured that shows 'good' delivery on adaptation. It is that adaptation is not yet a top priority in government.

One of the key recommendations for addressing the adaptation crisis is to treat it as a whole-of-government priority, rather than leaving responsibility to DEFRA alone. We know the impacts are felt everywhere: across the NHS, transport and energy systems, schools, and people's ability to work and go about daily life. Every department will be affected, so every department must play its part in preparing for the conditions climate change will create. Otherwise, we risk building homes, transport systems and an energy grid that simply cannot function in a hotter, more extreme future.

Although we have a cross-government Climate Resilience Steering Board, this hasn't shifted delivery. We need a public facing Resilience and Adaptation Commissioner who can work



across-government to drive urgent action to adapt to the impacts of climate change and nature loss. Similar to the Children's Commissioner in England or the Future Generations Commissioner in Wales, this public role would lead on building and advocating for resilience across the UK.

The Commissioner would work with the CCC, helping Ministers, departments and wider government to act on their latest advice. For example, the Commissioner would support departments in setting adaptation targets, as has been recommended by the Government's Chief Scientific Advisor. The Commissioner would also be able to build on CCC reporting by drawing the links between the UK's adaptive capacity and the impacts on individual departments, helping to guide best practice and policy, and advocate for the benefits of resilience building in the UK. The Commissioner would coordinate, assist and advise existing delivery bodies, laws and strategies, without adding new layers of decision-making, instead focusing on driving the UK from planning into delivery.



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Contact

parliament@zerohour.uk

zerohour.uk

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