



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

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To all MPs in England

Dear Colleagues,

Environmental Improvement Update

In January 2023, we published the [Environmental Improvement Plan](#), our five-year delivery plan to restore nature and improve the environmental quality of the air, our waters, and our land, building on the 25 Year Environment Plan vision. Since then, we have been hard at work making progress in delivering the ambitious goals set out in the plan.

We set [13 long-term statutory targets](#) alongside interim targets to tackle some of the biggest environmental pressures and make tangible progress over the next five years.

Today, we have published the 5th and final Annual Progress Report against the 25 Year Environment Plan that was published in 2018. This is our second statutory report under the Environment Act 2021. The publication of this year's report reasserts the government's commitment to delivering the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and progress we have made to deliver the Environment Act since this achieved Royal Assent in November 2021. I am proud of our achievements since 2021, and in particular what the Defra team have delivered since the publication of the Environment Improvement Plan in January. Annexed to this letter is a list of all the actions we have undertaken to improve the natural environment in your constituencies and in our marine environment.

This is an important and exciting moment to celebrate the progress we have already made and to look forward to continuing to work together to achieve our commitments.

RT HON Therese Coffey MP

Annex: List of actions since EIP launch

Thriving Plants and Wildlife

- Launched the £25 million Species Survival Fund to drive action to halt the decline of species, tackle habitat loss and create nature-rich landscapes.
- Made £14 million available for local authorities and community groups to invest in new tree planting projects, including in urban areas.
- Awarded £40 million to over 80 conservation projects across the globe that boost biodiversity and support communities, from snow leopards to pangolins.
- Opening a multi-million-pound grant scheme for projects to tackle biodiversity loss in the UK Overseas Territories through Darwin Plus.
- Designated the first three Highly Protected Marine Areas in English waters.
- Opened the second round of Landscape Recovery which will support up to 25 projects led by farmers and land managers to create new habitats for wildlife.
- Opened consultations for the first 6 Fisheries Management Plans that set out the proposed policies and measures to secure long-term sustainability of UK fish stocks.
- Protected vital food for seabirds and marine mammals by deciding not to allow UK sandeel fishing for the third consecutive year, totalling 5,773 tonnes, and consulting on a wider ban across English waters.
- Initiated a Global Roadmap together with the French Government for Harnessing Biodiversity Credits, announcing an Advisory Panel of world-leading experts who will lead an open and inclusive international process to drive forward nature financing.
- Published the Green Finance Strategy and Nature Markets Framework, setting out how Government will support the growth of high-integrity nature markets to help meet our target to raise at least £500 million in private finance to support nature's recovery every year by 2027 in England, rising to more than £1 billion per year by 2030.

Clean air

- Banned the sale of traditional house coal and restricted the sale of wet wood.
- Set out actions for local authorities to improve air quality and meet our ambitious PM2.5 targets through the Air quality strategy: framework for local authority delivery

Clean and plentiful water

- Published the comprehensive Plan for Water to deliver a healthy water environment and ensure a plentiful supply of water for the future.
- Accelerated over £2.2 billion for infrastructure to tackle storm overflows, strengthen drought resilience, increase water supply, and protect natural ecosystems.
- Introduced laws to scrap the cap on variable monetary penalties and speedup enforcement methods to hold water companies and others who pollute the environment to account.
- Increased funding for round one of the Slurry Infrastructure Grant from £13.2 million to £33.9 million following strong interest in the scheme since its launch in December.
- Written to wet wipe producers to ask them to set out how they will address concerns about so-called 'flushable' wipes that cause blockages and water pollution.
- Committed to consult to end the sale of wet wipes containing plastic.
- Committed to putting our target to tackle storm overflows on a legal footing through the Environment Act 2021.
- Designated four new bathing waters bringing the total across the country to 424, the highest number ever.
- Hosted local farmers, councillors, environmental groups, MPs and the Welsh Government at a summit to discuss actions to improve the state of the River Wye.

Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides

- Accepted recommendations to protect people and the environment from the potential impacts of PFAS chemicals.
- Made £3 million of investment available to develop more sustainable fertilisers at the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate Summit in Washington DC.

Maximise our resources, minimise our waste

- Confirmed our ban on single-use plastics such as plates, trays, bowls and cutlery from October.
- Agreed a far-reaching statement with 52 other countries supporting the development of an ambitious, international legally binding treaty to tackle plastic pollution.

Using resources from nature sustainably

- Opened up the improved Countryside Stewardship scheme to reward farmers and land managers for actions to protect and improve the environment.
- Accelerated the roll out of the Sustainable Farming Incentive by bringing forward actions this summer to manage hedgerows, plant nectar-rich wildflowers and manage crop pests without the use of insecticides.
- Sought views on how we improve hedgerow protections as part of the agricultural transition, building on the 50,000 miles of hedgerows already supported by farming scheme investment.
- Hosted the first ever 'Nature for Finance' event in 10 Downing Street, bringing together farmers, land managers and investors to identify new investment opportunities to drive forward nature recovery.
- Published the first six fisheries management plans to deliver sustainable fisheries for current and future generations.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change

- Set out our ambition to reduce Defra sector emissions in The Net Zero Growth Plan.
- Planted 3,627 hectares (approximately 4 million trees) in the 2022/2023 planting season, which is a 40% increase on last year.
- Funding over 7,000 hectares of peatland for restoration under the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme.
- Taking forward action on all recommendations of the Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force – with over £7.5 million of new funding for innovative water management pilots and £5 million to support wetter farming projects.
- Published the third National Adaptation Programme, setting out our comprehensive plan to adapt to the risks and opportunities of climate change over the next five years.
- Funding six landscape-scale nature restoration projects to trial carbon capture and climate change mitigation.
- Launched a £40 million grant programme to help put nature at the forefront of the fight against climate change and poverty, as part of a new Global Centre on Biodiversity for Climate.

Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards

- Better protected over 26,000 properties in 2022/23.
- Funding £26 million from the £100 million Frequently Flooded Allowance to better protect more than 2,300 households and businesses.

Enhancing biosecurity

- Updated our Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy to tackle the existing and growing threat posed to species and the wider economy.
- Published the Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain, positioning the UK as a global leader in plant health.
- Published the draft Border Target Operating Model to deliver a suite of new digital improvements and digital systems which will strengthen our biosecurity at the border and improve efficiencies across border processes.

Enhancing beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment

- Published England's first ever national Marine and Coastal Wildlife Code.
- Opened a further 21 miles of the King Charles III England Coast Path, creating 208 miles of continuous national coastal trail in North Yorkshire, and over 850 miles in total.