

People & Nature: International Asks for the Next Government

CAFOD, CI-UK, Fauna & Flora, Forest Peoples Programme, IIED, RSPB, WWF-UK, ZSL
July 2024

Securing the health of Earth's climate, ecosystems and biodiversity is essential to the well-being of all people. The interdependence of people, particularly the poorest communities, and nature is well documented, as are the under-recognised contributions of Indigenous Peoples to slowing climate and nature damage. We cannot tackle the climate crisis without halting and reversing the destruction of nature. This challenge - for nature, climate and people - is the greatest challenge of our time and the next five years will be critical.

The next Government must tackle the challenges facing humanity and our planet urgently and coherently. Here we set out four areas for action:

1. Diplomacy / Global Leadership

- **Launch a bid to host the 'Nature Summit' in 2026:** COP17 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The UK has never previously hosted the Nature COP. This would be an opportunity to work with developing countries on their nature finance priorities and place Indigenous Peoples and local communities at the heart of the summit. As part of this commitment, the Prime Minister should join global leaders at CBD COP16 in Colombia in October.
- **Appoint a global 'People and Nature' envoy** and a cross-departmental (FCDO & DEFRA) ministerial position to work across Whitehall and ensure join-up and international leadership on people and nature.
- **Make achieving an equitable 30x30 target a key foreign policy objective:** Deliver the global 30 by 30 target agreed at COP15 via building on DEFRA's 30x30 facility, ensuring full consultation with partner countries with a specific focus on advancing land tenure rights and equity in conservation (alongside the focus on effective management of these areas), and advancing work with the High Ambition Coalition (HAC).
- **Focus on impact at scale:** The limited political, parliamentary and financial resources available need to be focused on actions that can support systems change and transformation and deliver substantive nature and climate outcomes, over and above low impact but populist issues such as the import of hunting trophies.

2. Aid & Finance

A) Public Finance

- **Maintain ODA commitments:** Keep our promises to the Global South by committing to deliver the UK's existing £3bn nature and £1.5bn forests spending targets, including through the Global Forest Finance Pledge (GFFP) and the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF), as part of the CBD target of \$20bn of annual public nature funding by 2025. Then build on this in the next UK climate aid spending period (2026-2031) by spending 30% of an expanded climate finance budget on rights-respecting nature positive solutions, with a further non-

ICF ODA ring fence for non-climate-related environment and nature programming.

- **Improve delivery mechanisms:** Expand the UK government's capacity to support the delivery of locally-led climate and nature finance interventions via increased FCDO headcount, and reform these aid flows to provide longer-term (10yr+) financing for nature protection and restoration programmes that can be delivered effectively at the local level by, or in close coordination with, Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- **Reform aid in support of human rights, climate & nature:** All ODA spending should be human rights, nature and climate positive and poverty focused. The UK should rapidly and completely divest from all existing fossil fuel projects financed with UK aid by British International Investment (BII), and commit to expanding the existing nature-positive aid commitment to all forms of UK overseas financing. UK aid should also reprioritise engagement with agriculture and land use, to focus on the promotion of sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices and inclusive land governance and tenure reform.
- **Strengthen aid transparency** and public funding coordination by committing to re-align with the EU by doing detailed annual nature & climate aid reporting.
- **Support the UK Overseas Territories:** Increase funding to the Blue Belt programmes to support UK Overseas Territory communities maintain their protections of 4 million square kilometres of ocean (over 1% of the global ocean).
- **Safeguard the Biodiversity Challenge Funds:** These flagship Funds (Darwin, Darwin Plus & Illegal Wildlife Trade) enable UK & global civil society to deliver high profile, impactful and cost-effective biodiversity and poverty reduction projects.
- **Recognise and champion the need to re-direct and reform subsidies** and perverse incentives driving biodiversity loss and human rights abuses abroad, such as UK subsidies for unsustainable biomass imports for biomass generation. Also address harmful conditionalities imposed through World Bank and Multilateral Development Bank contracts, such as World Bank promotion of regulations and laws that support the expansion of commercial markets for hybrid seeds and chemical inputs such as pesticides, which do not support poor smallholder farmer's diverse needs, and don't help with the reduction of poverty or increase food security.

B) Private Finance

- **Mandate sector-by-sector transition plans:** align private capital and ensure business plays their part, mandate Transition Plans for all listed and private companies, including climate *and* nature, to facilitate a just transition.
- **Reform financial systems:** Establish loss and damage funds, fix broken global tax architecture, resolve the new global sovereign debt crisis and reform international financial institutions. Non-market mechanisms (such as philanthropy) must remain a key part of the international resource mobilisation

approach to funding climate mitigation and adaptation, and addressing biodiversity loss.

- **Explore and promote innovative sources of finance:** Establish fair and effective ways of raising money to tackle the climate crisis, via debt infrastructure and international financial institutions (IFIs). Such initiatives should supplement existing funding, ensure polluters pay their fair share towards climate clean up, address unfair debt servicing by lower- and middle-income countries, and ensure better representation in international institutions.

3. The UK's Environmental & Social Footprint

- **Ensure policy coherence:** Ensure coherence between trade policy and our international nature commitments. For example, establish legal minimum environmental and social standards for food imports so imported food is held to the equivalent minimum standards as the food we produce at home and support producers in the Global South to adapt in order to meet these standards.
- **Take a just approach to ensuring zero deforestation:** Implement the long overdue due diligence requirement legislation (Schedule 17 of the Environment Act 2021, with the amendments proposed by the Environmental Audit Committee report on Global Deforestation) so businesses no longer import products to the UK which contribute to illegal deforestation. Equally, widen the scope to end the UK's contribution to all unnecessary and/or unsustainable deforestation for good while ensuring that this is done in consultation and partnership with those countries and communities most impacted, for a just transition.
- **Regulate corporate impacts overseas:** Introduce a new UK law that includes a duty to prevent human rights and environmental harm; mandate all businesses and the public sector to undertake "human rights and environmental due diligence" in a gender sensitive way, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs); require a just transition away from fossil fuels in line with limiting global warming to 1.5°C; hold businesses liable when they fail to prevent harm, placing on businesses the burden of proving they did all they reasonably could to prevent harm, and providing access to justice for victims.

4. Lead by Example on Nature in the UK

- **Go beyond work already done to ensure that the UK has a more ambitious NBSAP,** which can demonstrably get the UK back on track to meet global targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.
- **Develop a credible NDC by February 2025,** emphasising the role of nature as our ally in tackling climate change, to demonstrate action and unlock ambition in others.
- **Align the UK NDC & NBSAP:** An ambitious and aligned UK NBSAP and NDC would return the UK government to a credible claim of being a leader on tackling global nature-people-climate issues, including recognition of the role of local and empowered grass-roots initiatives in the UK.

- **Swiftly pass the UK legislation needed to ratify the UN High Seas Treaty:** to enable protection of areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- **Ensure joined-up, evidence-based decision making:** Ensure that decisions taken in the UK government are credible, science-based and can demonstrably meet the ambitious targets needed for nature, climate and people. This means urgently reviewing the Environmental Improvement Plan, Net Zero Strategy, Land Use Framework and Food Strategy to increase their ambition and delivery. In the longer term to develop new framework legislation to ensure this is hardwired into future government decision-making, with independent accountability built in.
- **Apply a net zero and nature test for all government spending** hardwiring climate and nature into spending decisions, and champion this globally.

We warmly welcome further discussion and collaboration on all these points.

