

Caroline Lucas launches Green Party nature commitments, and A New Deal for Nature



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Caroline Lucas, former co-leader of the Green Party and its candidate in Brighton Pavilion, showcased the Party's commitments on nature and launching A New Deal for Nature, at an event at The Linnean Society in central London.

A New Deal for Nature is an independent report commissioned earlier this year to inform her work in Parliament, as well as to feed in to the Green Party's policies on nature and stimulate public and political debate. It's been written by a group of leading UK conservationists and nature writers, Mark Cocker, Jeremy Mynott, Jake Fiennes, Helen Smith and Patrick Barkham.

"We are not only running out of time on the climate emergency, there's also little time left to reverse the catastrophic decline in nature and wildlife," Lucas said.

"This election has to mark a turning point and the moment when people vote for Nature."

Green party commitments on nature and wildlife

It is more urgent than ever to reverse the decline of wildlife and nature in Britain, one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. The 2019 State of Nature report found that 41% of species in the UK have declined, and a quarter of mammals are at risk of disappearing altogether.

The Green Party's manifesto has more than 70 proposals related to nature and wildlife, with the boldest and best policies for protecting it – for the benefit of people and nature. As the UN global assessment of nature, the IPBES, made clear, the breaking of environmental limits presents extreme danger for all humanity.

Among manifesto pledges are a 10-year transition to agro-ecological farming, more outdoor learning and the introduction of a GCSE in Natural History to encourage better knowledge and understanding of nature.

One of the party's key proposals is for a Sustainable Economy Act, so that the way we run our economy works with nature not against it, with new legally binding targets for biodiversity, soil health and water quality alongside other measures.

It is a broken economic system which has caused both the climate and biodiversity crises, and that has to be addressed if we are to restore our natural world.

That means moving away from endless consumption and GDP growth as the measure of economic success, scrapping environmentally destructive projects like HS2 and airport expansion, and repurposing the economy so that it also serves the needs of future generations.

While the Green Party manifesto is more ambitious and comprehensive than any other in its pledges on nature and wildlife, the Party recognises the importance of being challenged by experts to ensure policies measure up to the challenges we face.

Report recommendations

A New Deal for Nature focuses on eight areas for change including farming, schools & young people, urban wildlife, the marine environment and biosecurity. Among its 80 recommendations are:

- New national parks, with a goal of designating 20% of Britain as national park.
- Every farmer should devote a minimum of 15% of their land to nature, and be paid to do so.
- All primary schools should deliver one hour a day outdoor learning every day, in addition to break time.
- Twin every primary school with a farm
- Encourage more wildlife-friendly gardens by casting off the obsession with tidiness. Ban the sale of all plastic grass, unless for sports pitches via planning permission.
- Wild public land. Hospital grounds to be re-greened and re-wilded to aid patient recovery
- Permanently protect some brownfield sites as SSSIs, give others “pop-up” temporary wildlife protection
- A moratorium on expansion of aquaculture operations, particularly open-cage salmon farming, shown to be harming the aquatic environment..
- Improve early-warning systems to assess the threats posed by invasive, non-native species which are growing by 10-12 species every year.

Caroline Lucas said at the report launch:

“Other parties still ignore the fundamental economic and infrastructure changes we need to truly protect the natural world. We’re looking ahead to what’s being called ‘2020 super year’ for nature and climate with crucial international summits taking place.

“Yet we’re also looking at a Johnson Brexit deal that is even worse for the environment and nature than the May hard-Brexit deal. Now more than ever, we need more Green MPs to stand up for wildlife and put the wellbeing of people and nature first across all policy making.”

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