

Press release: International Day of Biological Diversity

The United Nations International Day of Biological Diversity this year is encouraging everyone to consider the positive actions they can take to support [‘Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health’](#).

There is overwhelming evidence that human activity is impacting on the decline in biodiversity, outlined within a recent review of the Earth’s biodiversity by the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#).

At Natural England, we are working with people across society including land managers, ecologists, planners and developers to protect and enhance our rich variety of life. Their work supports the important goods and services our biodiverse ecosystems provide such as food, clean water and carbon storage, but also the provision of education, recreation and heritage, some of which form part of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) – all needed for good health and well-being.

This work has been given greater drive by the [Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan](#) which we help us to focus on the continued conservation and recovery of species, and restoration and expansion of habitats. We have also been working hard to enhance and expand Sites of Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves, and support environmentally friendly farming techniques both now and following our departure from the EU.

Chair of Natural England, Tony Juniper said:

Globally, and on our doorstep, we need to work together to halt the loss of animals, plants and ecosystems. Our planet’s unique web of life is absolutely critical for our future health and prosperity.

The good news is it is not too late. The 25-Year Environment Plan provides a blueprint for action, restoring habitats at a landscape scale to reverse species decline while providing solutions to some of the climate change challenges we face.

I’ve seen first-hand the enthusiasm farmers and landowners have for conserving and restoring the natural environment. My ambition at Natural England is to work with them, and others, to deliver this 25-year vision and achieve the change we, and our natural world, so urgently need.

Through the conservation of nature, landscape and environmental management, over recent years we have:

- Helped farmers to successfully [integrate the management of biodiversity and conservation of the environment](#) into farm business through Catchment Sensitive Farming methods, Environmental Impact Assessments and the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, as well as through the restoration and creation of habitats such as woodlands and species-rich grasslands, and the protection of water, soil and air quality.
- Increased public access to the natural environment through the [England Coast Path](#), [Children and Nature Programme](#) and [Nature Recovery Network](#) which aims to create 50,000 hectares of new green space in cities and the countryside to help improve health and well-being.
- Continued to ensure the notification of Sites of Special Scientific Interest to conserve the natural environment, and extend those existing to protect our most important areas of biodiversity and geodiversity. This included the new introduction of the [Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SSSI](#) to protect the coastal wildlife of the Tees Estuary and the introduction of [SSSIs in Dorset and Halesowen](#) to protect the fungi and grassland.
- Continued to manage around two thirds of National Nature Reserves in England, vital to the conservation of biodiversity and home to some of the most important sites for wildlife and geology in England such as [Woodwalton Fen](#).
- Delivered restoration of over 4,000 hectares of rare lowland raised bog and associated habitats from funding from Defra and the EU's LIFE+ programme such as [Bolton Fell Moss](#).
- Helped to protect marine biodiversity and a 'blue belt' of marine protected areas around England such as our most recent proposals to [strengthen the protection for the Isles of Scilly](#) home to over 8,000 pairs of 13 different seabird species and pre-consultation advice to Defra on proposed Marine Conservation Zones.
- Saved 20 species from extinction and helped put more than 100 more species on the road to recovery in support of our ['Back from the Brink' partnership programme](#).
- Created a new [award winning approach to protect great crested newt populations](#) and support sustainable development by both creating and restoring better and more joined up habitat ahead of development to increase health and resilience.

At Natural England we continue to invest in new initiatives, technologies and

efficiencies to provide a more modern, streamlined service across our biodiversity work. This includes seeking new sources of investment in biodiversity such as through largescale partnership projects, and using new mechanisms such as net gain. This also includes working with partners and stakeholders to restore priority habitats and species through the ongoing species recovery programme, and co-designing how we meet the opportunities of the 25 Year Environment Plan.