

Take Nature Seriously: Detailed policy asks

Building resilience through targeted nature policy:

- **Prioritise support for river woodland restoration initiatives, particularly in agriculture and forestry policy and funding.** This will deliver multiple “low hanging fruit” nature-based solutions like cleaning water and support the ever-increasing need for climate adaptation.
 - The Trust calls for at least half of Forestry Grants to go towards supporting restoration of native woodlands (such as Scots pine, oak, and aspen) with riparian prioritisation applied.
 - Co-operative “at scale” schemes need to be developed in Tier 3 of the reformed agricultural funding system, and crucially these schemes need appropriate budget.
- **Fully embrace the role of beavers in delivering climate resilience through flood and drought mitigation** by making it easier to move beavers to high-conservation value, low-conflict sites within Scotland (read more on the [importance of beavers here](#)).
- **Reduce deer densities to sustainable levels to encourage woodland regeneration.** NatureScot need to be empowered to deploy their full range of statutory powers, and prioritisation needs to be given to protected areas and the six landscape recovery zones identified by NatureScot. Within the [six priority zones](#), emphasis should be placed on developing and fostering [community led approaches](#), [building skills](#), providing food and allowing people to take ownership of solutions to the climate and nature crisis (read more on our [policy on deer here](#)).
- **Commit to ambitious action to tackle invasive non-native species**, for example, Government-led strategic action to stop grey squirrels moving into the highlands and supporting a programme to remove and prevent invasive non-native conifers on peatland to support carbon sequestration.
- **Implement adequate monitoring and enforcement of fisheries management measures to safeguard nature**, as well as meaningful engagement with communities to ensure local support once the long-delayed measures are implemented for the marine protected area network (read [more about marine protected areas here](#)).
- **Ensure the fishing fleet outwith the marine protected area network is operating sustainably** through the use of Remote Electronic Monitoring, with adequate resourcing to analyse the data and enforce these measures being paramount (read more on our [fisheries management policy here](#)).

Policy levers for mainstreaming environmental action:

- **Deliver the soon-to-be-established statutory nature recovery targets.** By the time of the election, we will have in place the Natural Environment Bill which will bring with it statutory nature targets. In manifestos we need to see a strong commitment to taking a whole-of-Government approach to delivery as well as meaningful engagement with delivery partners. This will include assigning clear Government leads and establishing independent monitoring.

- **Invest in regional land-use partnerships (RLUPs) and use them to help target private and public money.** With communities sufficiently resourced to engage meaningfully, RLUPS can help communities have a say in how their land is used. If tied to the decision-making process around funding, RLUPS can also deliver multifunctional landscapes. RLUPS used in conjunction with Nature Networks represent our only viable route to a just transition where communities can meaningfully engage with nature-based solutions.
 - We recommend a minimum baseline of £500k per annum for RLUPS for three years, ensuring this includes support for community capacity to engage.
 - We recommend annual reporting on just transition for nature and climate outcomes in each RLUP.
- **Significantly increase efforts to meet, and fully benefit from, 30x30.** Scotland has made international commitments to [protect 30% of land, freshwater, and sea for nature by the end of this decade](#). However, progress towards meeting these targets must be scaled up across Government through ambitious and robust policy. To see tangible benefits these can't just be paper parks which are protected in name only. As well as establishing the protected sites, we need to see investment in monitoring, enforcement and support.
- **Use an ecosystem-based approach to National Marine Plan 2 development** that recognises the importance of protection alongside restoration. We also want to see commitment to addressing data gaps and utilisation of a mitigation hierarchy for developments. This will be crucial to ensuring we manage our seas sustainably, for the benefit of all stakeholders.
- **Work towards the outcomes in the Blue Economy Vision so that by “2045 Scotland’s shared stewardship of our marine environment supports ecosystem health, improved livelihoods, economic prosperity, social inclusion and wellbeing.”** One of the outcomes in the Blue Economy Vision of Scotland is an “ocean literate nation”, which will be vitally important to work towards in the new Parliament. Having a population that is informed and engaged on marine issues will be crucial to mitigating the effects of the nature and climate crisis.

Policy tools to mobilise sustainable investment:

- **Increase proportion of agriculture budget which supports farmers to adopt nature- and climate-friendly practices, thereby directly tackling the threat that the climate and nature crisis pose to food security.** This approach will support a vibrant farming sector, whilst also delivering other vital nature-based solutions to Scotland’s wider priorities. We need to see a transition plan from the Government outlining how we get to a system where 75% of our farming budgets are supporting environmentally sustainable, regenerative farming. Anything less does not get us anywhere near delivering against agreed 2030 targets for nature (read more about the [potential benefits of farm payments here](#)).
- **Embed natural capital as a national priority through the National Performance Framework, with protections for Scotland’s peatlands, forests, rivers and sea.** This

means legally binding commitments in the secondary legislation of the Natural Environment Bill.

- **Support local authorities to deliver Nature Networks and establish a coordinated national network across Scotland to deliver ecological connectivity.** Nature Networks should be used to create a pipeline of “shovel ready” projects that local authorities can use to direct funds from “positive effects for biodiversity” as required by the National Planning Framework 4. Nature Networks should also be used to spatially prioritise essential green and blue infrastructure. To help achieve this, NatureScot should centrally coordinate spatial expressions of the Nature Network to guide ecological connectivity and provide a clear picture of national opportunity.
- **Restore nature at a much bigger scale by unlocking and mobilising private sector investment in natural capital,** with robust safeguards to ensure ecological integrity and community benefits. By catalysing market-driven investment in Scotland’s natural assets, there can be significant increase in high-quality and large-scale projects by 2030.
- **Further develop and properly support a dedicated Nature Restoration Fund.** Funding must be multi annual, it should be linked to the wider Nature Network development and priorities under the Biodiversity Delivery Plan.
- **Ensure proper resourcing for Marine Directorate to fulfil their role in management and enforcement of marine protected areas management measures.** There should be continued investment in meaningful engagement with communities across Scotland to help increase trust and confidence in government bodies as well as helping to foster buy-in for management decisions. This should include in-person events covering as much of the country as possible, and innovative methods to engage people in policy rather than just holding traditional drop in events. This could look like collaborating with existing community events and networks and considering lesser heard voices.
- **Provide a dedicated funding pot for community led marine projects at a local level, to encourage bottom-up policy approaches.** This should not be limited to marine restoration projects and should instead include a more holistic view of marine management and engagement.