Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA
CC: Deputy Prime Minister · Chancellor of the Exchequer · Foreign Secretary · Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs · Secretary of State for Energy Security & Net Zero

9th June 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

We write as some of the United Kingdom's leading researchers to share the latest evidence on why investing in nature is vital to the UK's growth, security and international leadership.

Nature underpins UK growth, resilience, and well-being

Healthy ecosystems provide around £44bn a year in measurable services to England alone—including clean water, fertile soils, and raw materials—and generated £489bn in lifetime health benefits across the UK in 2022[1]. As the UK Treasury–commissioned Dasgupta Review concluded, nature is "our most precious asset" and must be properly valued in all economic decision-making.

Investing in nature yields substantial returns; for example:

- **Natural flood management** at Pickering Beck delivered a 5.6 benefit-cost ratio[2].
- **Fully restoring the UK's peatlands** would cost £8–22bn in present-value terms, yet the avoided carbon-emission benefits are valued at about £40–110bn over the next 100 years—a five-to ten-fold return—and would also help safeguard the roughly 70% of public drinking water that comes from upland peaty catchments[3].
- **Nature-based solutions**—such as saltmarsh restoration and agroforestry—can outperform conventional alternatives in delivering climate resilience, creating jobs, and stimulating local economies[4].
- **Greener school environments** improve children's attentiveness and cognitive development, supporting educational attainment and long-term human capital[5].

These returns come in addition to, rather than at the expense of, other national priorities such as defence, health or education.

Degradation is already costing us—especially communities that feel left behind

- Soil erosion (£1.2bn/yr in England and Wales)[6] and pollinator decline (over £430-690m/yr in the UK)[7] severely undermines agricultural productivity and resilience now and into the future.
- Unmanaged climate impacts could trim up to 7% of UK GDP by 2050 and leave one in four properties at flood risk by 2050[8].
- Shocks arising from loss of nature could erase 7–9% of GDP and 14–18% of agricultural output globally[9]—risks no finance minister can ignore. Yet the Office for Environmental Protection finds the Government to be off-track on 20 of 43 statutory targets for nature[10], and the UK remains one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world.

The UK once led—now we must lead again

At COP26, the UK helped launch the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration and Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue, unlocking nearly £14 billion in finance. Domestically, mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has positioned the UK as a leader in developing nature markets that link growth with environmental improvement. But proposed exemptions risk undermining that progress, damaging confidence in nature-positive growth, and missing the chance to bring nature's benefits to communities most in need. Cuts to nature-friendly farming funds would compound these concerns. Reversing course now would harm the UK's credibility just as global partners look to Britain for leadership on growth-driven climate and nature action. *COP30 in Belém is a chance to restore ambition abroad and trust at home—showing that nature can power a fairer, more resilient economy.*

The public expects action

The People's Plan for Nature, developed through the UK's first citizens' assembly on nature, called for urgent government leadership, an end to nature-harming subsidies, stronger protections for land and sea, and better access to nature for all communities[11]. The five actions below reflect these priorities and the evidence base that supports them.

Five evidence-based actions for growth, resilience and global leadership*

1. **Put nature at the centre of COP30 and the wider climate agenda.** Use the UK's convening power to secure a flagship leaders' declaration in Belém on biodiversity protection and just, deforestation-free commodity supply chains. This would demonstrate that safeguarding nature is indispensable to countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the UN Global Stocktake, and the goals of both the Paris Agreement and the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The UK should also champion international safeguards so that global decarbonisation and commodity-chain expansion do not harm ecosystems or local communities, building on the FACT Dialogue Roadmap agreed at COP26.

2. **Embed nature in the UK's growth and finance architecture.** Update the Green Book, 2025 Spending Review and Bank of England stress-tests to reflect nature's £1.8 trillion UK asset value and macro-economic risks. Consider establishing a **National Nature Wealth Fund**, funded in part by redirecting harmful subsidies, to attract long-term private capital and create green jobs in areas left behind.

3. **Launch a "Nature for Communities" programme.** Prioritise urban greening, riverside parks, coastal restoration and natural flood-management where access to green space is lowest and climate risk highest—improving health, education and local productivity. BNG and other planning instruments could be used to achieve this goal.

4. **Publish the Land Use Framework and accelerate nature-friendly farming.** Provide cross-government clarity on how land can deliver housing, food, clean energy and biodiversity; scale up higher-tier Environmental Land Management and Landscape Recovery schemes that raise farm incomes and resilience.

5. **Turn the 30 × 30 pledge into real, community-benefiting protection.** Close funding and enforcement gaps on land and at sea, complete Marine Protected Area byelaws, and ensure protected sites are ecologically healthy and anchor local tourism and blue-economy jobs.

Our offer

We stand ready to discuss this evidence with your officials and welcome the opportunity, ahead of the Autumn Statement, to explore how these actions can advance the Government's growth, levelling-up and international objectives.

Decisions taken in the months ahead will shape the nation's prosperity and security for decades.

Now is not the time to turn our backs on Nature.

Sincerely,

** As researchers working across ecology, social sciences, economics and public health, we feel a responsibility to share the best available evidence. We make these recommendations in a personal capacity, grounded in peer-reviewed research and official assessments. We do not speak for our institutions, nor do we endorse any party-political position. Affiliations provided for identification only.*

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Professor Tim Benton – Professor of Population Ecology, University of Leeds
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Professor, Lora E Fleming – University of Exeter Medical School
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Professor Chris Evans, MBE – UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Professor Heather Koldewey – Head of Ocean Conservation, Zoological Society of London and University of Exeter
Professor Michael Depledge CBE FRS – University of Exeter

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