

A simple guide to Biodiversity 2020 and progress update

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What is Biodiversity 2020?

[Biodiversity 2020](#) is a national strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services; it was published in summer 2011. It sets out the Government's ambition to halt overall loss of England's biodiversity by 2020, support healthy well functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.

What does it say?

The strategy describes what is needed to halt overall biodiversity loss by 2020 and sets ambitious goals about:

- better wildlife habitats – quality goals for priority habitat and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- more, bigger and less fragmented areas for wildlife – an increase in priority habitats by at least 200,000ha
- the restoration of 15% of degraded ecosystems – as a contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation
- establishing a Marine Protected Area network
- managing and harvesting fish sustainably
- marine plans in place by 2022
- an overall improvement in status of our wildlife and prevention of further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species
- significantly more people engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking positive action

How is Biodiversity 2020 different from the Government's previous approach under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan?

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan focused on the conservation of priority habitats and species. The valuable work of Biodiversity Action Plan groups across the country helped to ensure that some of our most important species and habitats were maintained and enhanced. However, biodiversity was still declining and two key reports suggested that we needed a new approach if we wanted to halt biodiversity loss:

- [Making Space for Nature](#) report chaired by Sir John Lawton
- [The UK National Ecosystem Assessment](#)

These reports concluded that focussing on individual species and sites remained important, but that this needed to happen at a larger scale so our habitats were better able to support more species and that our conservation action should focus on whole natural systems.

How is Biodiversity 2020 being delivered?

Making Space for Nature was clear that achieving our ambitions for biodiversity and nature cannot be a job for Government alone. Government will play its part and Defra has recently updated the *Biodiversity 2020 Delivery Plan*¹ which sets out the actions Government is taking, including:

- funding a network of Nature Improvement Areas
- setting the legislative framework furthering the evidence base; and
- direct contributions from our delivery bodies such as Natural England the Environment Agency, and the Forestry Commission

Defra and Natural England are working closely with a wide range of stakeholders to drive the delivery of the strategy's outcomes on the ground. This work has identified the need to provide people involved in local conservation work with more information about what they can do to contribute to delivering the strategy.

What progress has been made so far?

Progress has been made against each of the strategy's ambitious goals (see annex A for details) but it is clear that a concerted effort from all partners is needed if we are to halt overall biodiversity loss. This is backed-up by the [Biodiversity 2020 indicators](#)², which show a mixed picture, and the recent [State of Nature report](#) which saw the UK's wildlife organisations join forces to undertake a health check of nature in the UK and its Overseas Territories.

How can local conservation projects contribute to delivering the strategy's outcomes?

Biodiversity 2020 deliberately avoids setting specific targets and actions for local areas because Government believes that local people and organisations are best placed to decide how to implement the strategy in the most appropriate way for their area or situation.

However, local projects are particularly likely to be making a key contribution to the strategy if they involve:

- improving the quality of existing habitats so they are able to better support biodiversity
- creating new areas of priority habitat.
- identifying and managing ways for habitats to be linked together to create new networks for wildlife
- managing biodiversity at the scale of whole natural systems and landscapes.

¹ Email us at biodiversity@defra.gsi.gov.uk if you would like us to email you a copy of the Delivery Plan.

² The Biodiversity 2020 indicators will be updated in October 2013

- engaging people in new ways that increases the number of people who understand and value nature.

Resources to help local projects to contribute

More information about the ways in which local projects can contribute and record their contributions can be found on the [Biodiversity 2020 Google+ page](#) including:

- [a breakdown of priority habitats to assist partners in planning habitat creation projects](#)
- [a guide to potential funding sources to help partners deliver Biodiversity 2020](#)
- [a simple guide explaining how you can record your conservation work so it contributes to the delivery of the national strategy and info of what is happening in your area](#)
- [10 Components of Excellence in Local Delivery Approaches](#)
- [Biodiversity 2020 publications and products](#)

The best way to keep-in-touch with all the Biodiversity 2020 latest news and information is to follow <https://twitter.com/DefraNature>. We'll also work with Local Nature Partnerships and Natural England's place-based teams to make sure advice and messages are tailored according to local needs.

Annex A: Biodiversity 2020 - progress so far

Biodiversity 2020 Outcome		Commentary on progress
1.A	90% of priority habitats in favourable or recovering condition	Whilst there has been an improvement overall, for some priority habitats there has been a decline in condition; some habitats remain particularly difficult to target for positive action. We are working with a range of partners to address this and have published a breakdown of the types of priority habitat we want conservation projects to create.
	50% of SSSIs in favourable condition	37.55% of SSSIs in favourable condition as at 31 March 2013. This is 0.5% below the trajectory to 2020. These risks are being managed through Natural England's work with the Major Landowners Group and other partners so that partner's contributions can be better understood.
	Maintain at least 95% of SSSIs in favourable or recovering condition	96.11% of SSSIs in favourable or recovering condition as at 31 March 2013
1.B	No net loss of priority habitat and an increase in the overall extent of priority habitats by at least 200,000 ha	Currently below the required trajectory and significant reliance on Agri-Environment Schemes. Limited detail of Partner's contributions outside Agri-Environment Schemes remains a key issue and we are working to address this through the Terrestrial Biodiversity Group and the Biodiversity Action Recording System
1.C	At least 17% of land and inland water conserved through effective and integrated approaches – including through management of our existing systems of protected areas and NIAs	Work in refining outcome 1C was completed during the year. This confirmed the adoption of the 'Ecosystem Approach' as the means by which the outcome will be achieved, building on principles published by the Convention on Biological Diversity and Defra. A suite of criteria are currently being trialled with a range of partnerships (AONBs, National Parks and NIAs) to test the use of 'effective, integrated and joined up approaches' before rolling out the approach to other partnerships so a trajectory towards the outcome can be established.
1.D	Restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems as a	Confirmation of which priority habitats will support this outcome has been agreed during the year, and work

Biodiversity 2020 Outcome		Commentary on progress
	contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation	scoped to establish a baseline of 'degraded ecosystems' from which to measure future progress. This work is being developed so that it contributes towards the European Biodiversity Plan target for degraded habitat. Further work to improve our understanding of the relationship between habitat condition and key ecosystem functions, such as carbon sequestration and storage, are being considered with links to the UK NEA
2.A	By the end of 2016 in excess of 25% of English waters will be contained in a well-managed Marine Protected Area network that helps deliver ecological coherence by conserving representative marine habitats	Good progress has been made in achieving this target. Just over 23% of English waters are covered by European Marine Sites, with the identification Special Protection Areas for birds to be completed by end 2015. Consultation on the first tranche of Marine Conservation Zones ended on 31 March 2013, with designations planned before the end of the year.
2.B	By 2020 we will be managing and harvesting fish sustainably	Revised approach to fisheries management being implemented and on time to ensure effective management of European sites by 2016.
2.C	By 2020 we will have marine plans in place covering the whole of England's marine area, ensuring the sustainable development of our seas, integrating economic growth, social need and ecosystem management	Subject to Cabinet Clearance, the Marine Management Organisation will commence the public consultation on the Draft East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans in July 2013 for a 12 week period; with the intention of adopting the plans before the end of 2013 in line with the Natural Environment White paper commitment. Plans will be in place for the whole of the English marine area by 2022. The MMO has, however, committed in its 2013-2016 Corporate Plan to deliver the 10 marine plans for England by 2021.
3	Overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and prevent further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species	Progress against Outcome 3 continues to be made with a range of projects delivered in direct support of improving the conservation status of threatened species, including prioritising those of most urgent need. A joint plan of action with NGO partners is in development.

Biodiversity 2020 Outcome		Commentary on progress
4	By 2020, significantly more people will be engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking positive action.	We are facilitating a group of environmental NGOs and independent engagement experts to help them to identify how the sector can be more effective in its engagement work.

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This document/publication is also available on our website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-biodiversity-and-ecosystems-at-home-and-abroad/supporting-pages/stopping-the-loss-of-biodiversity-in-the-uk>

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