



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2019/0230, 23 October 2019

Debate on an e-petition on restoring nature and climate change

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This pack has been prepared ahead of the debate to be held on an e-petition on restoring nature and climate change to be held in Westminster Hall on Monday 28 October 2019 at 4.30pm. The debate will be opened by Daniel Zeichner MP on behalf of the Petitions Committee.

e-petition [254607](#) **Restore nature on a massive scale to help stop climate breakdown** closed on 17 October 2019 with 109,077 signatures. It reads

To avoid a climate emergency we need to act fast. Rewilding and other natural climate solutions can draw millions of tonnes of CO₂ out of the air through restoring and protecting our living systems. We call on the UK government to make a bold financial and political commitment to nature's recovery.

We need to limit global temperature rise to 1.5C to avoid the catastrophic effects of climate breakdown. To do this we need both to reduce carbon emissions and to remove carbon from the atmosphere. By drawing down carbon, nature's recovery can help us reach net carbon zero.

We have a chance for the UK to become a world leader in natural climate solutions. Those who manage our land and sea play a pivotal role and should be supported to come together to deliver carbon reductions.

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. The petition

The e-petition [Restore nature on a massive scale to help stop climate breakdown](#), which ran for six months until 17 October 2019 and received 109,077 signatures, says

To avoid a climate emergency we need to act fast. Rewilding and other natural climate solutions can draw millions of tonnes of CO₂ out of the air through restoring and protecting our living systems. We call on the UK government to make a bold financial and political commitment to nature's recovery.

We need to limit global temperature rise to 1.5C to avoid the catastrophic effects of climate breakdown. To do this we need both to reduce carbon emissions and to remove carbon from the atmosphere. By drawing down carbon, nature's recovery can help us reach net carbon zero.

We have a chance for the UK to become a world leader in natural climate solutions. Those who manage our land and sea play a pivotal role and should be supported to come together to deliver carbon reductions.

The Government responded on 2 May 2019:

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges we face. Nature-based solutions are key to tackling climate change. The Government is deploying such solutions to improve our natural environment.

Climate change is one of the most urgent and pressing challenges we face today. The UK is acting to tackle it, including taking action to restore nature.

The 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) signals a step-change in ambition for the natural environment in England. It commits the Government to improving the condition of our protected sites network and to creating or restoring 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat in England, as part of a Nature Recovery Network to protect and restore wildlife. Within our draft Environment Bill, we have committed to place the 25YEP on a statutory footing. The Bill will include ambitious legislative measures to take direct action to address the biggest environmental priorities of our age, many of which are linked directly to climate change: air quality, nature recovery, waste and resource efficiency, and water resource management.

Our woodlands and wetlands provide vital services, such as carbon sequestration and flood prevention that can help to mitigate climate change and help us adapt to its impacts. Tree planting is one of the main contributors to nature-based carbon sequestration and the Government supports this in a number of ways. Our manifesto committed to planting 11 million trees by 2022, and in addition a further 1 million trees in our towns and cities, and we also have a long term aspiration to increase woodland cover from 10% to 12% by 2060. To achieve these goals, in the Autumn Budget the Chancellor announced £10 million for an Urban Trees Challenge Fund and £50 million to help plant new woodlands through the Woodland Carbon Guarantee.

Peatlands are our largest terrestrial carbon store. Drained peatlands release their carbon, adding greenhouse gases to the

atmosphere. Organic or peat soils make up 11% of England's total land area, over 70% of which are drained or in poor condition. We have committed to publishing an England Peatland Strategy. The strategy will set out our vision to reverse decline in peatlands and restore them, which is in line with the Government's commitment to be the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than we found it. Work is underway on four large-scale peatland restoration projects across England, to which we have allocated £10 million, and will restore 5,851 ha of degraded peatlands.

Natural England have an ongoing uplands programme working with landowners to put in place Long Term Management Plans to reverse degradation and help them sustainably manage and restore upland peatland habitats. We will also be setting up a Lowland Agricultural Peatland Taskforce to assess how best to restore and sustainably manage England's peatland, which provides essential food and fibre for the UK in lowland settings. Once restored, our healthy functioning peatlands will provide a range of public benefits in addition to carbon storage, including flood mitigation and biodiversity rich habitats.

Under the new Environmental Land Management Scheme we will pay land managers public money for public goods, including mitigation of climate change. Land managers could deliver this by sequestering carbon through, for example, peatland restoration and tree planting.

Internationally, the UK is also supporting ambitious action by countries and companies to combat deforestation and promote the sustainable management of the world's forests through our international climate finance (ICF). The Department for International Development (DFID), the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) all contribute to the UK's £5.8 billion overall climate finance commitment from 2016 until 2020/21. ICF programming aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and land use change and help forest communities adapt to climate change through sustainable farming and land use practices.

For example, Defra's current ICF investments aim to protect and restore more than 500,000 hectares of forests, delivering 70 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions savings. In Madagascar, our Blue carbon project will protect and restore 20,000 hectares of mangrove forest through community forest management, benefiting over 100,000 people with the development of sustainable livelihoods. Our project in Brazil will protect 100,000ha of forest in the Amazon, Atlantic Forest and Cerrado regions and support over 5,000 small and medium sized farmers by helping them to transition into low carbon sustainable agriculture.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

2. Background

The UK legislated in June 2019 to set a net-zero carbon target for 2050. The petition calls on the Government to fund nature restoration through rewilding and other natural climate solutions, and for the UK to becoming a world leader in natural climate solutions.

2.1 UK Net Zero carbon target and land use

In June 2019 the Government introduced a net-zero carbon target, by [amending](#) the Climate Change Act 2008 to include a target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. Further details can be found in the Library Briefing Paper on [Legislating for Net-Zero](#)

This put into effect a May 2019 recommendation from the UK's Committee on Climate Change for a UK [net zero target](#). although it diverges from the recommendation that the target be achieved by domestic action only by retaining the ability to use international carbon credits.

In its May 2019 report, [Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming](#), the Committee identified an "opportunity to define a better land strategy that responds fully to the challenge of climate change".¹ It concluded that fundamental changes to land use would be required to deliver UK climate goals, including encouraging less carbon intensive food consumption and releasing agricultural land for other uses such as tree planting, energy crops and peatland restoration.²

2.2 Rewilding

A 2016 [POSTnote](#) provides an overview on Rewilding. It notes that there is no single definition of rewilding, but it generally refers to reinstating natural processes that would have occurred in the absence of human activity.³

[Rewilding Britain](#), the registered charity, which launched the petition defines rewilding as follows:

Rewilding is the large-scale restoration of ecosystems where nature can take care of itself. It seeks to reinstate natural processes and, where appropriate, missing species – allowing them to shape the landscape and the habitats within.

Rewilding encourages a balance between people and the rest of nature where each can thrive. It provides opportunities for communities to diversify and create nature-based economies; for living systems to provide the ecological functions on which we all depend; and for people to re-connect with wild nature.⁴

¹ CCC, Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming, May 2019, p204

² p23

³ [Rewilding and Ecosystem Services](#), POSTnote 537, September 2016, p. 1

⁴ Rewilding Britain, [Rewilding](#) [accessed 2 July 2019]

However, this call for restoration of habitats can be controversial as it has been seen by some as conflicting with continued agricultural land use.⁵ Further details of [projects in the UK](#) can be found on their website.

2.3 Government Policies

The Government has set out new policy measures for [energy and transport](#) as a result of the introduction of net-zero target. It has also highlighted [the Environment Bill](#) which will create the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP). The OEP's role will be to hold government and other public bodies to account on their environmental obligations, including on climate change. The [Library Briefing on the Environment Bill](#) includes further details of the OEP's role.

In addition, the [Clean Growth Strategy](#) published in October 2017, set out a number of commitments in relation to land use and climate change:

1. As we leave the EU, design a new system of future agricultural support to focus on delivering better environmental outcomes, including addressing climate change more directly
2. Establish a new network of forests in England including new woodland on farmland, and fund larger-scale woodland and forest creation, in support of our commitment to plant 11 million trees, and increase the amount of UK timber used in construction.
3. Support peatland through a £10 million capital grant scheme for peat restoration

The Government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) "sets out what [the Government] will do to improve the environment, within a generation".⁶ The core ambition "to leave our environment in a better state than we found it", an approach described as environmental net gain.⁷

Some policies in the 25 Year Environment Plan refer explicitly to natural solutions, including the development of a Nature Recovery Network:

we will investigate putting in place up to 25 new catchment or landscape scale nature recovery areas to significantly expand wildlife habitat. These would help build resilience to climate change, and provide opportunities for species and ecosystem recovery, and for the reintroduction of formerly native species, as well as for local community engagement and business development.⁸

⁵ Civil Society, [Rewilding Britain pulls out of £3.4m project after concerns about its involvement](#), 22 October 2019

⁶ Defra, [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), 11 January 2019

⁷ Defra, [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), 11 January 2019, p 6

⁸ Defra, [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), 11 January 2019, p59

Rewilding Britain [stated in response](#) to the 25 Year Environment Plan that “the aspiration to restore nature at this scale is laudable”, but stated that new environmental management systems will “require unprecedented levels of coordinated action” which “the plan doesn’t address”.⁹

It has also produced a report [Rewilding and climate breakdown: How restoring nature can help decarbonise the UK](#), which sets out its view on how habitat restoration can contribute to the UK’s carbon targets. It proposes a support system, summarised as follows:

Our indicative annual standard payments would support restored peat bogs at £144/ha, woodland at £512/ha, heathland and species rich grassland at £292/ha, saltmarsh at £322/ha, ponds and lakes at £204/ha and offshore ecosystems at £161/ha per year. Land holdings that come together to form contiguous zones of recovering, protected and restored ecosystems could attract enhanced payments. This would create two million hectares of new woodland, combined with full protection for the UK’s peat bogs and heaths – totalling another two million hectares – and support for an additional two million hectares of species rich grasslands.¹⁰

Petition response

The Petition response from the Government sets out a number of nature based polices aimed at tackling climate change, including those set out in 25 year Environment Plan:

- Plan under the 25 Year Environment Plan to develop a Nature Recovery Network (see below);
- The Conservative manifesto commitment to plant 11 million trees plus an additional 1 million in towns and cities;
- Peatland restoration, including a commitment to an England Peatland Strategy;
- Incentives under the [Agriculture Bill](#) for mitigating climate change – “land managers could deliver this by sequestering carbon through, for example, peatland restoration and tree planting”;
- [International climate finance](#) (ICF) which “aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and land use change and help forest communities adapt to climate change through sustainable farming and land use practices”.¹¹

Rewilding Britain stated in a response to this that the Government’s efforts where “nowhere near enough”:

Aspirations to move from the current 10% tree cover to 12% by 2060 are simply nowhere near enough. Some £10 million promised for urban trees and £50 million for new woodland

⁹ Rewilding Britain, [25-year environment plan – is this a turning point for rewilding?](#), 16 January 2018

¹⁰ Rewilding Britain, Parliamentary Debate “[Restore nature on a massive scale to help stop climate breakdown](#)” October 2019

¹¹ e-petition [254607](#) Restore nature on a massive scale to help stop climate breakdown, 17 October 2019Ibid.

creation will barely register against the kind of carbon mitigation impacts that we need to see.

Likewise, the £10 million for current projects to restore 5,851 ha of degraded peatlands in England will do little to restore the overall capabilities of our most valuable natural asset for sequestering carbon.¹²

¹² Rewilding Britain, [Rewilding vs climate breakdown: warm words from government won't be enough](#), 31 May 2019

3. News items

The Ecologist

Bring back real forests across Europe

14 October 2019

<https://theecologist.org/2019/oct/14/bring-back-real-forests-across-europe>

Business Green

Green New Deal: Government urged to introduce UK Restoration and Rewilding Plan

16 September 2019

<https://www.businessgreen.com/bg/news-analysis/3081559/green-new-deal-government-urged-to-introduce-uk-restoration-and-rewilding-plan>

Guardian

Rewild a quarter of UK to fight climate crisis, campaigners urge

20 May 2019

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/21/rewild-quarter-uk-fight-climate-crisis-campaigners-urge>

Carbon Brief

In-depth: Could 'rewilding' help to tackle climate change?

22 October 2018

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/in-depth-could-rewilding-help-tackle-climate-change>

4. Press releases

National Farmers' Union

NFU unveils its plan for British farming to deliver net zero

29 September 2019

The NFU has unveiled its vision of how British farming hopes to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040.

The NFU's new report, [Achieving Net Zero: Farming's 2040 Goal](#), sets out three pillars of activity that will help the industry to reach its ambitious goal. These are:

- Improving farming's productive efficiency
- Improving land management and changing land use to capture more carbon
- Boosting renewable energy and the wider bio-economy.

The first of these pillars is about reducing emissions, using a wide variety of techniques to enhance productivity and deliver the same output or more from every farm, and working smarter to use fewer inputs.

The second is about increasing farming's ability to capture more carbon through bigger hedgerows, more trees and woodland, enhancing soil organic matter and conserving existing carbon stores in grassland and pasture.

The third pillar involves displacing greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels and removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through bioenergy and bio-based materials such as hemp fibre and sheep's wool.

[Download a copy of the Achieving Net Zero report](#)

NFU President Minette Batters said:

There is no doubt that climate change is one of the biggest challenges of our time and rising rapidly on the political agenda both at home and globally.

Representing British farming, we recognise our unique position as both a source and a store for greenhouse gas emissions and, importantly, how we can build on our work so far to deliver climate neutral farming in the next 20 years.

We aspire to be producing the most climate-friendly food in the world. The carbon footprint of British red meat is only 40 per cent of the world average. And we can go further, whether that is through improving our productivity, using our own land to take up and store carbon, planting hedgerows and trees to capture even more, and boosting our renewable energy output. We know that there is no single answer to the climate change challenge facing us all.

That is why we must work across a range of internationally recognised inventories and utilise the best available science, working in partnership with concerted support from government, stakeholders and the wider supply chain. This 'white paper'

provides a strong foundation on which to talk to others about joining us on our journey.

We mean what we say about delivering against this aspiration and we have a sense of urgency for what is needed to achieve it. We need to implement pilots of the new Environmental Land Management scheme and productivity scheme to see how these work practically on the ground, as they will play a key part in achieving net zero. A new shared prosperity fund for rural development also needs to be in place and support from the current Industrial Strategy is crucial.

I am also very clear that we can deliver on our commitment to net zero while retaining, if not growing, our agricultural capacity. British farmers are proud to produce food to some of the highest standards of animal welfare and environmental protection in the world. We must avoid anything that undermines UK food production, and merely exports our greenhouse gas emissions to other parts of the world.

Natural England

Peat pilots set to revive English peatlands

12 August 2019

Five of England's most iconic peatlands sites are a step closer to being revived and restored as part of [Defra](#) & Natural England's Peat Pilots.

The pilots could play an important part in reducing UK carbon emissions in the future and are taking place in the areas of Northumberland, Greater Manchester, North York Moors, East Anglia and Dartmoor.

Peatland sites are often thousands of years old, and Natural England estimates that England's peatlands now store around 580 million tonnes of carbon – a crucial tool in combating climate change and achieving the government's aim to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Bradley Tooze, uplands programme director, Natural England, said:

Since the ice age, large amounts of carbon have been captured and stored in the peatland bogs over a period of some 15,000 years.

These bogs will play a vital role in combating the impacts of climate change if we are able to restore, protect and manage them so that they continue to absorb and store carbon into the future.

Peatlands also provide many other benefits to our communities including flood alleviation, improving water quality in rivers and lakes and providing habitat for some of our most special wildlife.

Environment minister Thérèse Coffey said:

The restoration of England's iconic peatlands will make a vital contribution to reducing the UK's carbon emissions.

The peat pilots are the latest in a series of measures we're taking with Natural England and will play an important role in the development of a new English Peat Strategy.

This will explain how, over the next 25 years, we will improve the condition of our peatlands, so that they meet the needs of wildlife, people and the planet.

The projects which form part of the pilot are located in five areas across England:

- Dartmoor: Working with [National Park](#), [Duchy of Cornwall](#), [South West Water](#) and others; particularly focusing on restoration of peat in Molinia-dominated areas on common land
- East Anglian fens: This project will work with internal drainage boards to look at water flows on and around the fens. It will also bring in long-term sustainability of peat management opportunities which will assist with the creation of the Lowland Agricultural Peat Taskforce
- Greater Manchester: Working with [Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#) and other partners, the pilot will demonstrate how management of peat is key to the resilience of the city-region
- Northumberland: This project will be working with partners including the [Northumberland National Park](#) and [Forest England](#). It will explore new opportunities for ecological restoration and ongoing funding for land managers with peat on their land in the Cheviot Hills and the 'Forgotten Lands' east of Carlisle
- North York Moors: Working with the [North York Moors National Park](#) this project will examine data on peat depth and extent and will explore how novel peat restoration techniques can be applied

It is hoped the projects will help to turn around the fortunes of England's peatlands, with around two thirds of peatlands now considered degraded as a result of cutting, drainage, burning, over-grazing and atmospheric pollution. The emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere from England's peatlands have recently been estimated as being equivalent to [11 Million tonnes of CO2 per year](#).

Clifton Bain, director of [IUCN UK Peatland Programme](#), said:

The international community has recognised the importance of peatlands in our global future. Investing in peatland health is one of our easiest actions against climate change. The UK peatland community have the knowledge and skills to secure the long term future of our peatlands - supporting our natural carbon stores, helping wildlife and people.

Dr Olly Watts, senior climate change policy officer for the [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#) said:

Peatlands are central to tackling the decline of nature and the climate change crisis, and require more action. Ahead of Defra's much-awaited England Peatland Strategy, the RSPB welcomes and will contribute to these pilot projects.

Particularly exciting, the challenge of farming in lowland peat areas, with thinning soils and our peatlands' largest greenhouse emissions: how can economic land use develop towards a sustainable, nature and climate friendly future?

We look forward to effective ways to assess the state of, and more sustainable management for, all our varied peatlands.

Rewilding Britain

Rewilding Britain proposes post-Brexit transformation of land use to deliver UK zero-carbon target

21 May 2019

- New report demonstrates how restoring nature on a massive scale can help address climate emergency
- 80,000 members of the public sign supporting petition
- National debate on the future of the countryside is needed

Rewilding Britain is calling for a post-Brexit transformation of farm subsidies to help deliver the UK Committee on Climate Change's new zero-carbon target. In a report published today, the charity demonstrates how changing the way rural land is managed can be as effective as high-tech solutions and calls for a national debate on the future of the countryside.

Over eighty thousand members of the public have now signed a supporting petition calling on the government to make a financial and political commitment to restore nature on a massive scale to help address climate emergency – with the greatest support coming from people in rural areas.

Using a costed proposal, the report demonstrates how the UK government's declared "public payments for public goods" principle can be put into practice by incentivising farmers and landowners to sequester more carbon in the UK's woodlands, uplands and meadows. The scheme would be funded through additional revenue raised by an economy-wide carbon pricing mechanism.

The charity estimates that six million hectares of regenerating woodland, peatland and species-rich grasslands could sequester about 47 million tonnes of CO₂ per year, more than a tenth of current UK greenhouse gas emissions.

In total this would cost around £1.9 billion per year, a third less than the current estimated EU Common Agricultural Policy cost of £3 billion. Recent weeks have seen the emergence of a "green spring" for the UK. The Extinction Rebellion protests, David Attenborough's latest documentary and Greta Thunberg's visit to the UK have preceded declarations of climate emergency across the country, including by the UK parliament.

Rebecca Wrigley, Chief Executive of Rewilding Britain, said:

We need new thinking and practical action if the UK government is to meet its long-term and legally-binding commitments to combat the catastrophic effects of climate breakdown.

In the last few weeks we launched a petition calling on the government to make a financial and political commitment to restore nature on a massive scale to help address this. We've had over eighty thousand signatures – with the greatest support coming from people in rural areas.

We are calling for more public debate around how our countryside is managed in the future – how we balance farming sustainably with ensuring local people can make a viable living.

Our report demonstrates how land use change with nature at its heart can play a major role in our efforts to meet our targets and address climate breakdown. We want the government to use the increasing sense of urgency as an opportunity to radically review how land is managed in the UK.

These proposals build on existing indications of a change of approach in land use – for example the UK government’s policy of “public money for public good” and the National Farmers’ Union commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2040.

“We need to listen to people directly affected and work constructively to avoid the kind of polarisation we’ve seen triggered by Brexit. We must come together to address the threat to us all.

Notes to Editors

- Under the proposed scheme, farmers and landholders would be paid £292 per hectare per year (ha/yr) to enhance and restore peat bogs and heath; £512 ha/yr to establish new native woodlands; £144 ha/yr for species-rich hay meadows and grasslands; £322 ha/yr for protecting saltmarsh; £204 for ponds and lakes; and £161 for offshore ecosystems. This would create two million hectares of new woodland, combined with full protection for the UK’s peat bogs and heaths – totalling another two million hectares – and support for an additional two million hectares of grasslands.
- The full report ‘Rewilding and climate breakdown: How restoring nature can help decarbonise the UK’ can be downloaded from www.rewildingbritain.org.uk
- The parliamentary petition “Restore nature on a massive scale to help stop climate breakdown” can be found at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/254607>

DEFRA/Forestry Commission

Government delivers new £10m fund to plant over 130,000 urban trees

Environment Secretary Michael Gove announces grants will be made available over the next two years to green town and city spaces.

19 May 2019

A new £10 million plan will see more than 130,000 trees planted across England’s towns and cities, Environment Secretary Michael Gove announced today.

Through the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, grants will be made available over the next two years to green urban areas and help meet the government’s target to plant one million urban trees by 2022.

Planting more trees is crucial in the fight against climate change, because trees store carbon and can help make our towns and cities more resilient. Trees in urban areas improve health and wellbeing, connect people with the outdoors, absorb noise, reduce flood risk, lower temperatures through shading, and create green spaces for communities to come together.

The scheme, which will be administered by the [Forestry Commission](#), will be open to individuals, local authorities, charities and NGOs. Grants will fund the planting of trees and the first three years of their care to ensure they can flourish into the future.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Trees are vital in the fight against climate change, which is why we must go further and faster to increase planting rates.

We need trees lining the streets of our cities and towns, not only to green and shade them but to ensure that we remain connected to the wonders of the natural world and the health and wellbeing benefits that it brings us.

Government Tree Champion Sir William Worsley said:

Trees are the lifeblood of our nation, and it is more important than ever to ensure they are rooted not only in our countryside, but in our towns and cities too.

The benefits of planting urban trees are endless, and I encourage anyone with the ability to apply for this fund to get involved and help green our towns and cities.

The grant will be delivered as a challenge fund, and therefore requires match funding from those who apply.

The scheme will support projects which can provide the greatest environmental and social benefits, and applications will be processed by the Forestry Commission. A map will be available to check eligibility before applying.

Forestry Commission Chair Sir Harry Studholme said:

I am delighted the Forestry Commission have been asked to deliver the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. The fund is an important part of the work that the Forestry Commission is doing to expand England's tree and woodland cover.

It allows us to plant more trees much closer to where people live and work, and where the many benefits of trees make the most difference. We look forward to lots of new planting happening this Autumn.

Chair of [England's Community Forests](#) and Director of [The Mersey Forest](#), Paul Nolan said:

There is an increasing understanding of the role that trees and woodlands play in helping to make our towns and cities better places for people and nature to thrive.

We need to be planting many more trees over the next 25 years, and England's Community Forests welcome this new investment that is being announced by the government.

The launch of the fund forms part of the government's [Year of Green Action](#), a year-long drive to help people to connect with, protect and enhance nature. This commitment forms part of the government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) to instill a legacy for the future, with a focus on children and young people.

Earlier this year the government [consulted on a raft of forestry measures](#) which included proposals to ensure communities have their say on whether street trees should be felled, with legislation to be brought forward later this year.

The government is committed to growing woodland cover, and this year we will consult on a new English Tree Strategy to accelerate woodland creation and introduce a flagship Environment Bill to address the biggest environmental priorities of our age.

The fund will be open this week for applications.

5. Parliamentary material

Environment Bill 2019-20

[Bill page](#)

[Commons Library briefing](#)

Committee Inquiry

House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
current inquiry [Peatland](#)

Debates

Commons debate on the Queen's Speech: The Climate Emergency

HC Deb 17 October 2019 | Vol 666 c755-

<http://bit.ly/33DWctu>

Lords exchange of questions - Peatlands: Commercial Exploitation

HL Deb 09 September 2019 | Vol 799 c1279-

<http://bit.ly/2A8d9PW>

Lords motion on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

HL Deb 02 May 2019 | Vol 797 c1067-

<http://bit.ly/2GSlr1A>

Commons debate: Environment and Climate Change

HC Deb 01 May 2019 | Volume 659 c225-

<http://bit.ly/2GOzuol>

Commons debate: Modern Farming and the Environment

HC Deb 12 March 2019 | Volume 656 c64WH-

<http://bit.ly/2F8CSLD>

Lords motion on Climate Change

HL Deb 24 January 2019 | Vol 795 c878-

<http://bit.ly/2SaPkBC>

PQs

[Topical Questions](#)

Asked by: Julian Sturdy

Will the Secretary of State reassure me that her Department is fully assessing the potential of UK peatlands and peatland restoration in regions such as North Yorkshire, where my constituency lies, in

getting us to net zero? Peatlands are a carbon sink that absorb more emissions than the world's oceans each year.

Answered by: Andrea Leadsom

My hon. Friend is right that peatlands have a vital role to play in delivering net zero. In addition to £10 million to help to restore more than 6,000 hectares of peatland over a three-year period, we are working with Natural England on a number of pilot projects, including one in North Yorkshire, to test our approach for moving all peatlands in England on to a path of recovery and restoration.

HC Deb 22 October 2019 | Vol 666 c807

[Forests: Carbon Emissions](#)

Asked by: Malhotra, Seema

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of The global tree restoration potential report, published in Science on 5 July 2019 that there are 1.7 billion hectares of treeless land on which 1.2 trillion native tree saplings would naturally grow, providing immense potential for tree-planting as a cheap and effective strategy to tackle climate change; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Dr Thérèse Coffey | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The UK Government recognises the huge potential for nature based solutions in tackling climate change while also supporting biodiversity. Trees are a major contributor to nature-based carbon sequestration. There are other natural sequesters including mangroves, sea grasses, salt marshes, soil and peatlands.

Through the UK's International Climate Finance (ICF, £5.8bn between 2016-2021) the UK funds several programmes in developing countries that use tree-planting as a strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and generating economic benefits for rural communities. For

example, Defra's investments are expected to restore 500,000 hectares of forest generating 70 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions savings. In Brazil, Defra has invested £55m to help rural farmers restore nearly 200,000 hectares of forest in the Amazon, Atlantic Forests, Cerrado and Caatinga biomes through the implementation of low-carbon agricultural practices. Defra has also invested £10 million to restore up to 20,000 hectares of mangrove forest in Madagascar and Indonesia and recently announced a further £12.75m to restore mangroves across Latin America and the Caribbean.

HC Deb 15 July 2019 | PQ 273790

[Environment Protection: Finance](#)

Asked by: Pennycook, Matthew

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to 25 Year Environment Plan published on 11 January 2018, what estimate he has made of the additional financial resources required to deliver the commitments made in that plan for the financial years (a) 2019-20 (b) 2020-21 and (c) 2021-22.

Answering member: Dr Thérèse Coffey | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Delivering the plan requires systemic changes across all parts of our economy. Our recently published Green Finance Strategy is an example of how we are driving this change by ensuring environmental risks and opportunities are integrated into mainstream financial decision-making; and accelerating finance to support the delivery of our environmental ambitions.

A key pillar of this approach is our plan to replace the scheme of payments under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy with a new Environmental Land Management scheme. As we leave the EU, we will establish a new scheme of payments to reward land managers for providing public goods, aligned to the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

In addition, the forthcoming Environment Bill will introduce a mandatory biodiversity net gain requirement for development. This will incentivise the avoidance of environmental impacts in development design, encourage the delivery of wildlife habitats in development sites, and stimulate the development of markets in habitat creation which will help to ensure that developers are able to fulfil net gain obligations off site when appropriate. We have also announced £50 million of funding for a new Woodland Carbon Guarantee to stimulate domestic carbon offsetting and incentivise new tree planting, and awarded £10 million of funding to four landscape-scale projects to help restore 6,580 hectares of upland and lowland peatlands over three years, with forecast 23,000 tonnes of carbon saved per year.

HC Deb 12 July 2019 | PQ 273465

[Climate Change](#)

Asked by: Lucas, Caroline

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to pursue and implement nature-based solutions domestically to (a) mitigate and (b) adapt to climate change and (c) protect and restore nature; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Dr Thérèse Coffey | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Nature-based solutions are key to tackling and strengthening resilience to climate change impacts. Our wetlands, forests and grasslands capture carbon – and provide other environmental benefits, such as flood management, pollination, and biodiversity. The Government is deploying such solutions to improve our natural environment and our Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out key policies on how improving nature can help tackle climate change.

Tree planting is one of the main contributors to nature-based carbon sequestration. Our manifesto committed to planting 11 million trees by 2022, and a further 1 million trees in our towns and cities. We also have a long term aspiration to increase woodland cover in England from 10% to 12% by 2060. To achieve these goals, in the Autumn Budget the Chancellor announced £10m for an Urban Trees Challenge Fund – which is now open for applications - and £50m to help plant new woodlands through the Woodland Carbon Guarantee.

Peatlands are our largest terrestrial carbon store. Organic or peat soils make up 11% of England's total land area, over 70% of which are drained or in poor condition. We have committed to publishing an England Peatland Strategy. The strategy sets out our vision to reverse decline in peatlands and restore them. Work is underway on four large-scale peatland restoration projects across England, to which we have allocated £10m, and will restore 5,851 ha of degraded peatlands. We are also improving saltmarshes.

Natural England has an ongoing uplands programme with landowners and we will also be setting up a Lowland Agricultural Peatland Taskforce to help sustainably manage and restore peatland habitats. Once restored, our healthy functioning peatlands will provide a range of public benefits in addition to carbon storage, including flood mitigation and biodiversity rich habitats.

Under the new Environmental Land Management Scheme we will pay public money for the provision of environmental public goods. These public goods will include the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

We also support nature-based solutions through our international aid programmes on forestry and mangroves/blue forests.

HC Deb 02 July 2019 | PQ 268450

[Peat](#)

Asked by: Brady, Sir Graham

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the protection and restoration of peat moss in achieving net carbon neutrality for the UK.

Answering member: Dr Thérèse Coffey | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Recently published Government research identified that the emissions from UK peatlands range from 18.5 to 23 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents per year. Peatland restoration is therefore a key way to mitigate emissions and will play an important role in achieving net carbon neutrality in the UK. We will publish an England Peat Strategy later this year which will set out our approach to protecting and restoring peat.

HC Deb 01 July 2019 | PQ 268974

[Climate Change](#)

Asked by: Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the merits of (a) rewilding and (b) other natural methods to tackle climate change.

Answering member: Dr Thérèse Coffey | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The concept of rewilding has a variety of characteristics and definitions applied to the term. Nature-based solutions are key to tackling climate change and averting its impacts. The Government is deploying such solutions to improve our natural environment.

The government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out key policies on how improving nature can help tackle climate change.

Under the new Environmental Land Management Scheme we will pay public money for the provision of environmental public goods. These public goods will include the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

Tree planting is one of the main contributors to nature-based carbon sequestration and the Government supports this in a number of ways. Our manifesto committed to planting 11 million trees by 2022, and in addition a further 1 million trees in our towns and cities, and we also have a long term aspiration to increase woodland cover from 10% to 12% by 2060. To achieve these goals, in the Autumn Budget the Chancellor announced £10 million for an Urban Trees Challenge Fund and £50 million to help plant new woodlands through the Woodland Carbon Guarantee.

Peatlands are our largest terrestrial carbon store. We have committed to publishing an England Peatland Strategy. The strategy will set out our

vision to reverse decline in peatlands and restore them. Work is underway on four large-scale peatland restoration projects across England, to which we have allocated £10 million, and will restore 5,851 ha of degraded peatlands. We are also improving saltmarshes.

Natural England has an ongoing uplands programme with landowners and we will also be setting up a Lowland Agricultural Peatland Taskforce to help sustainably manage and restore peatland habitats. Once restored, our healthy functioning peatlands will provide a range of public benefits in addition to carbon storage, including flood mitigation and biodiversity rich habitats.

We also support nature-based solutions through our international aid programmes on forestry and mangroves/blue forests.

HC Deb 10 June 2019 | PQ 257796

6. Useful links and further reading

[Rewilding Britain](#) report [Rewilding and climate breakdown: How restoring nature can help decarbonise the UK](#)

Natural Climate Solutions

<https://www.naturalclimate.solutions/the-science>

Common Wealth *UK Restoration and Rewilding Part of Common Wealth's Road Map to the Green New Deal*

<https://common-wealth.co.uk/re-wilding.html>

DEFRA [Year of Green Action](#) 2019

DEFRA [25 Year Environment Plan](#)

International Panel on Climate Change special report *Global Warming of 1.5 degrees C* October 2018

<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

Nature4Climate

<https://nature4climate.org/>

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