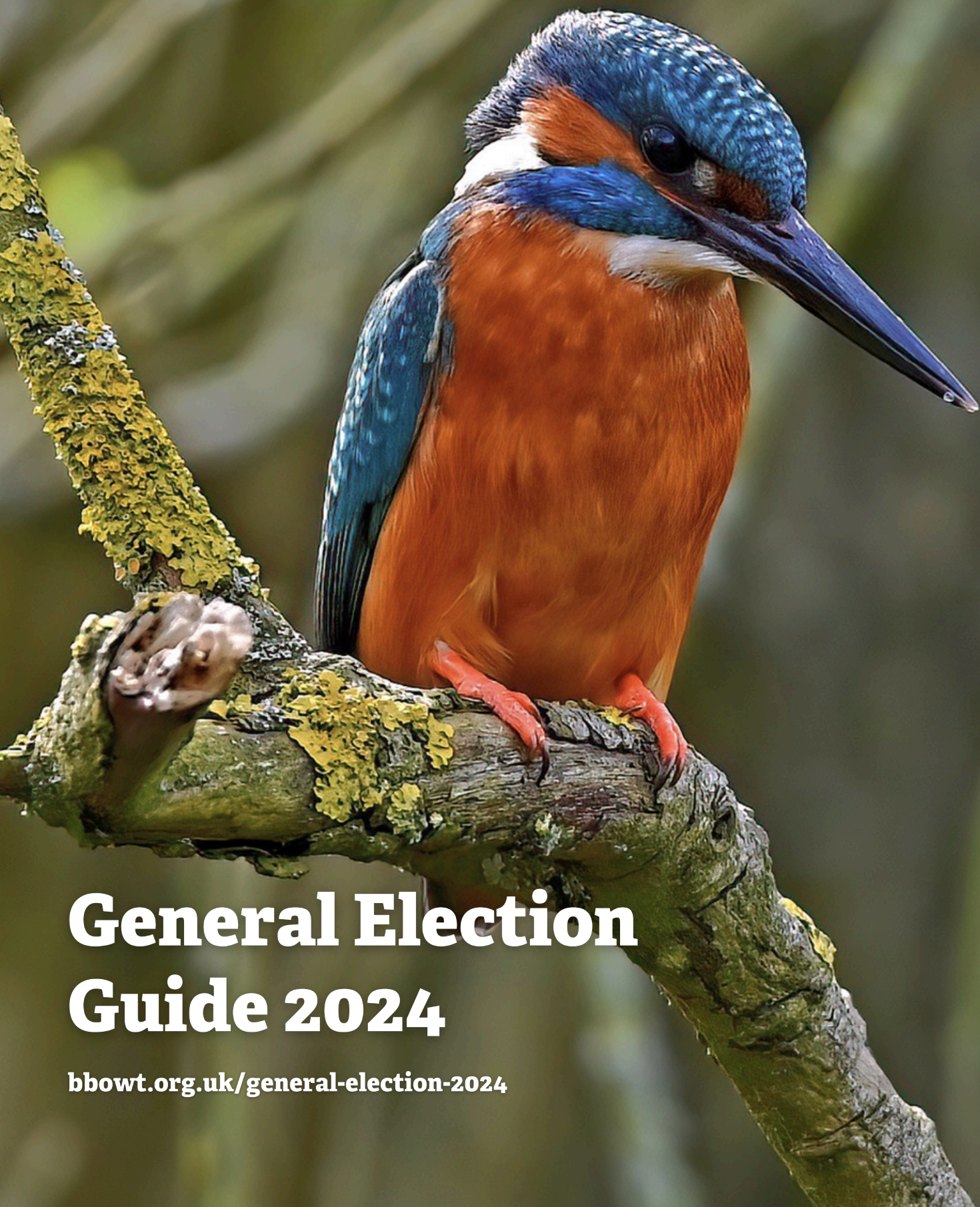




**Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
& Oxfordshire**
Wildlife Trust



General Election Guide 2024

bbowt.org.uk/general-election-2024

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Front cover image: © Zachery Osborne



We want leaders that stand up for nature!

Nature doesn't have a vote, so we have made a General Election Guide jam-packed with explanations, ideas, and resources. Learn how you can speak up for wildlife and the environment, encourage your future MPs to prioritise nature's recovery and most importantly how you can...



“We all need nature, for food, fresh air and water, and for our own wellbeing. And we know we can't fix the climate crisis without restoring nature, the two go together. The choice is clear: no nature, no future, no us. But it's not too late”
Steve Backshall, President, BBOWT

It's official! The UK will be going to the polls to vote in the General Election on Thursday 4 July.

Following on from our Local Elections Guide, we have produced this document to help you engage in the debates that will surround the upcoming election to ensure that the nature and climate crisis is at the top of the political agenda. It will seek to provide an overview of why this election is so important, what we at BBOWT are calling for from the next UK Government, and crucially how you can help us achieve our vision of more nature everywhere.

For additional information and guidance on campaigning, please visit our [election webpage](#).

IMPORTANT NOTE!

This year's election requires voters to present photo ID to vote at a polling station, under the Elections Act 2022. However, you do not need an ID to vote via post. Find a list of accepted voter ID [here](#).

Why is the 2024 General Election so important?

As the next Parliament will be responsible for the majority of the delivery towards the UK's 2030 environmental targets, the 2024 General Election will be a critical milestone on the path to achieving our strategic goals and vision of a thriving natural world. It will offer an unrivalled opportunity for BBOWT and its supporters to boost political support for efforts to tackle the nature and climate crisis and set the direction for the next Parliament.

Elections also provide a chance to build relationships with prospective parliamentary candidates and engage them with the issues that matter to you. Each candidate will be vying for your support and there are many issues that candidates will decide to focus on during their campaigns. It is important, therefore, that we show our future representatives that nature is a vote-winner. Recent surveys conducted by The Wildlife Trusts demonstrate a broad range of support for nature across the electorate, irrespective of voting choice.

Voting for strong environmental policies is often seen as the most effective means we as individuals can take to tackle the nature and climate crisis. Therefore, we must take the opportunity presented by this election to raise our concerns about the continuing decline of nature on our doorstep, and speak with a stronger, bolder and more confident voice.



Boundary changes

The electoral map of the UK is changing. The constituency boundaries that have been in place since 2010 are being redrawn to reflect changes in the population. This is based on the recommendations of the independent Boundary Commissions for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, this has created some entirely new constituencies. It is important, therefore, to check whether you now fall within the boundaries of a different or new constituency.

The constituencies across the three counties are:

Berkshire

- Bracknell
- Earley and Woodley
- Maidenhead
- Newbury
- Reading Central
- Reading West and Mid-Berkshire
- Slough
- Windsor
- Wokingham

Buckinghamshire

- Aylesbury
- Beaconsfield
- Buckingham and Bletchley
- Chesham and Amersham
- Mid-Buckinghamshire
- Milton Keynes Central
- Milton Keynes North
- Wycombe

Oxfordshire

- Banbury
- Bicester and Woodstock
- Didcot and Wantage
- Henley and Thame
- Oxford East
- Oxford West and Abingdon
- Witney

To find out who is standing for Parliament in your constituency, you can use the Democracy Club's online tool [Who Can I Vote For?](#) and type in your postcode.

Make sure you're registered to vote!

Click here to [Register to vote - GOV.UK](#)

You can check if you are already registered to vote by contacting your local Electoral Registration Office if you live in England. [The electoral register and the 'open register': Get on the electoral register - GOV.UK](#)

ID for voting

Voters are required to present photo ID to vote at a polling station, under the Elections Act 2022.

You'll need one of the following types of photo ID to vote:

- a UK or Northern Ireland photocard driving licence (full or provisional)
- a driving licence issued by the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands
- a UK passport
- a passport issued by the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or a Commonwealth country.
- a PASS card (National Proof of Age Standards Scheme)
- a Blue Badge
- a biometric residence permit (BRP)
- a Defence Identity Card (MOD form 90)
- a national identity card issued by the EU, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein
- a Northern Ireland Electoral Identity Card
- a Voter Authority Certificate
- an Anonymous Elector's Document

You can also use one of the following travel passes as photo ID when you vote:

- an older person's bus pass
- a disabled person's bus pass
- an Oyster 60+ card
- a Freedom Pass

Note: You do not need ID to post via postal vote.

Where you vote

To find your nearest polling station, you can simply put your postcode into the Democracy Club's online tool [Find your polling station](#) | [Where Do I Vote?](#)

If you are unable to vote in person you can apply for a postal vote ([Apply for a postal vote - GOV.UK](#)) or vote by proxy ([How to vote : Voting by proxy - GOV.UK](#)).

Polling stations are open 7am-10pm so there is plenty opportunity to find the time to vote. Organise when you plan to go and why not invite a friend, family member or co-worker to join you so you're less likely to forget.



Five priorities to ask your candidates to sign up to

In the run up to the General Election, you can ask your prospective parliamentary candidates to commit to taking action on any issue that you care about at a local or national level.

BBOWT has published a list of [five priorities](#) that we would like to see our future representatives commit to addressing, which you can bring up when you contact your candidates!

1. Bring back the UK's lost wildlife

Nature is declining at a speed never previously seen and shows no signs of slowing. Currently, around 8% of the land area of England is designated as a national or international protected area for conservation. This is not enough, especially if we are to meet the government's own target to protect 30% of the UK's land for biodiversity by 2030. Even if we successfully protect what we have left, the next UK Government must act to restore what has been lost and create more habitats for wildlife.

We are therefore calling on the Government to align across departments to put nature into recovery, on land and at sea, by the end of the next Parliament. Nature is vital to us all – for the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the space to help us feel secure, happy, and healthy. In recent years, we have also seen increasing numbers of people actively looking for ways to access nature close to where they live. Without urgent action to bring wildlife back from the brink, communities across the UK risk bearing an unimaginable cost.



2. End river pollution and water scarcity

The UK is ranked as one of the worst countries in Europe for water quality, with pollution beyond legal limits caused by a toxic cocktail of sewage and agricultural pollution. The State of our Rivers 2024 report carried out by the Rivers Trust found that not a single stretch of river in England is in good overall health. The water industry is the single biggest contributor towards poor water quality in the Thames basin. Chalk streams, one of the rarest habitats in the world, are found throughout Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire. Yet despite their scarcity and importance, they are continually being polluted by surface water that runs off local roads, carrying pollutants directly into watercourses. Five of Buckinghamshire's chalk streams even have sewage treatment works discharging treated effluent into them.

Our rivers are no longer suitable homes for wildlife, they are not fit for people to swim in, and thanks to climate change and growing demand, we are seeing water availability decrease before our eyes. Therefore, to end river pollution and unsustainable water use, we're calling on the next UK Government to enforce the law against polluters, half nutrient pollution by 2030 and deliver stronger protection for chalk streams.

3. Fund wildlife-friendly farming

The destruction of nature and the impacts of climate change are the biggest threats to food security in the UK. Food production relies on healthy soils, clean water, and resilience to climate change. But farming is one of the main causes of wildlife declines, as well as the leading cause of river pollution in England. Restoring nature on farms will bring many benefits, not just for wildlife but also for farmers. Working with nature can increase farm profits and resilience, reduce costs, and maintain or even improve yields.

By supporting farmers to shift towards regenerative, nature-friendly methods, farming has huge potential to deliver a green rural renewal. Farming is too often unsustainable, but with management of over 70% of UK land, farmers should be a significant part of the solution. BBOWT already works with farmers across the three counties who prove that wildlife-friendly farming is possible and profitable. Many farmers and land managers have gone to great lengths to support wildlife without being adequately rewarded. Ask your candidates how they will help to reverse this situation and ensure that farmers across our three counties receive the support they need to achieve a sustainable transition.



4. Enable healthy communities

Right now in the UK, poor quality living conditions are damaging people's health and cutting lives short. It is the most disadvantaged and the most vulnerable who are bearing the brunt of this situation. Those living in the most deprived areas are ten times less likely to live in the greenest areas. More than one third of the population - nearly 9.5 million households in England - are unable to access green places near their home. The current situation is unfair - but it does not have to be like this.

Improving access to natural, wildlife-rich places where we live, learn and work will transform people's lives, improving health, happiness, and hope across communities. To bring about healthy and sustainable communities, we're calling on the next UK Government to commit to a cross-government fund to grow community-based health services, address inequalities in access to natural spaces and enable all children to access outdoor learning opportunities.



5. Tackle the climate emergency

We are in a climate and nature crisis, and the two are inextricably linked. Climate change is driving nature's decline, and the loss of wildlife and wild places leaves us ill-equipped to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to these changes. One crisis cannot be solved without the other. The UK has a legal target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Nature can make a massive contribution to achieving this, or an even more ambitious target - but only if our damaged ecosystems are restored.

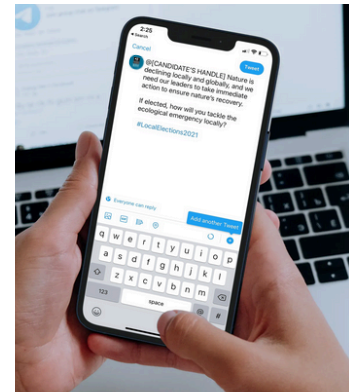
The next UK Government must recognise the importance of nature in achieving its net-zero targets - peatlands, woodlands, and other wild places store vast quantities of carbon. Habitat restoration is therefore essential. To meet the urgency of this crisis, the Government must integrate climate adaptation strategies across all departments, create a nature recovery network to help wildlife adapt to change and protect blue carbon stores from damage. Investing in energy efficiency is also vital - the greenest form of energy is the energy we don't use!

How can I make sure nature has a voice in the General Election?

1. Use social media

Many parliamentary candidates will use twitter as a part of their campaigning, so why not ask them directly how they intend to tackle the nature and climate crisis?

It could look like this:



@[CANDIDATE'S HANDLE] Nature is declining locally and globally, and we need to take immediate action to ensure nature's recovery. If elected, how will you tackle the nature and climate crisis locally? #GeneralElection2024

OR

@[CANDIDATE'S HANDLE] The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world and it is important to myself and other voters in [NAME OF YOUR LOCAL AREA] that we are doing our bit. What are your plans to create and restore nature in our area? #GeneralElection2024

You can tag multiple candidates from various parties to compare their answers. If there is a nature related issue specific to your constituency which you are concerned about, tweeting about it could be more likely to get a response, especially if it is shared by other residents in your area. Some candidates may also use Facebook and Instagram to update their followers on their ideas and goals for the constituency. Commenting with a question related to the post can be a good opportunity to publicly share a dialogue with your candidate which others can also read and benefit from.

As well as contacting your candidates, social media is also a fantastic way to spread the word about the election, especially to younger people. 18–34-year-olds are the demographic least likely to even register to vote. However, the more people that engage in the voting process the more likely there will be change and better representation for everyone. On the day itself you can remind friends and family who follow you the opening times of the polling stations and not to forget ID. Then why not vote with pride and take a picture at the polling station of you (or even your dog) with an 'I Voted' caption.

A tweet, post, story or even a message in a group chat might be what encourages someone you know to get involved; every vote is important!

2. Email or write to your prospective parliamentary candidates

Writing to your prospective parliamentary candidates is a good way of communicating your priorities as a community member, and a voter, to ensure the matters you care about are taken seriously by your candidates. The run up to any election is a great time to get your requests directly to candidates and having their commitments in response to your concerns in writing so when elected you can hold them to their word.

You can use our template below to write to your parliamentary candidates to ask them how they will take action for nature's recovery.

It's worth noting that the best and most effective emails are always the personal ones, so try to add in some reasons why you want your candidates to act for nature, and a few examples of what you think needs to be improved in your area. Remember to sign off your letter with your postcode (of the address where you are registered). This ensures that you will reach those that will represent you and candidates will be more likely to respond if they are aware that you are a voter in the local area they are hoping to represent.



Email/letter template

Dear [INSERT CANDIDATE NAME HERE],

As you are a candidate in the upcoming General Election, I am writing to you to ask how you plan to support nature's recovery in my local area if elected as a Member of Parliament.

I am greatly concerned about the decline of nature in my community and across the country, and the large numbers of people deprived of accessible green and wild spaces. [INSERT WHY NATURE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU]

We know that creating, enhancing, and restoring nature is also vital for tackling the climate crisis and nature provides benefits for wellbeing, physical health, and the economy.

If elected as an MP, you will play a vital role in restoring nature and tackling the climate and ecological crises locally and nationally. As a constituent, I am clear that these are key issues when considering who to vote for in the upcoming General Election.

Therefore, I am writing to ask what your plans are to put nature into recovery in our constituency?

In particular, I would like to see you commit to:

- Restoring our lost wildlife
- Ending river pollution and water scarcity
- Funding wildlife-friendly farming
- Enabling healthy communities
- Tackling the climate crisis

Kind regards,

[INSERT YOUR NAME HERE]

[INSERT POSTCODE]



3. Meet your local parliamentary candidates

Meeting your local parliamentary candidates is a good way to understand their priorities and identify how committed they are to acting on the nature and climate crisis.

We recommend contacting a candidate from each major political party who is standing your constituency and asking them for a meeting face to face, online or over the phone. Many candidates will also be going door to door to get support - you could also use this as an opportunity to ask some questions. Spend a bit of time researching the candidate online to understand more about who they are and what they stand for and think through how you might tailor the conversation to the candidate's interests. See the nature cheat sheet below for some quick facts and statistics that you can use to guide the conversation and back up your claims with evidence.

If you would like to meet with your local candidates, you can use the letter/email template above and insert the following:

"I would like the opportunity to hear how you intend to prioritise action for nature's recovery. I'd be grateful if you would please advise me of your availability for a meeting."

Suggested questions you can ask your candidates include:

- How will you improve biodiversity and help nature to recover in your constituency?
- What will you do to clean up our local rivers and protect them from further damage?
- How will you support farmers in the local community to adopt nature friendly farming methods?
- How will you support and increase access to wild green spaces in our local area?
- How will you advance the transition to net zero?

4. Ask a question at a hustings



A hustings is a nonpartisan event bringing together electoral candidates in the run up to an election. It's an opportunity for voters to hear the views of candidates on a range of issues and in turn, voters can raise issues that matter to them by asking questions during the event.

They usually feature candidates from all major parties, are most frequently organised by local organisations or community groups and held in the constituency where the candidates are standing for election.

How to find a hustings near you

Some places where you can find where hustings will be advertised include:

- Council website
- Local newspaper and newspaper website
- Library
- Social media pages and websites of the candidates
- Ask people on a local social media group if they know of any hustings
- Search online the words “hustings” and the name of your constituency

Once you have found a hustings near you, you can submit a question to ask the candidates. We have a few suggested questions on the previous page which you can be used at a hustings too. However, it would be a good idea to ask questions to the candidates about any issues that affect you locally especially if there are specific threats to your local wildlife and/or environment.

At BBOWT, we are organising a hustings in each of our three counties. Visit the [Events](#) page on our website to find out if there is one in your constituency and how to sign up!

5. Organise a hustings

Can't find a Hustings near you? Why not organise one?

Hustings can cover a whole range of topics or be specific about a particular issue e.g., the nature and climate crises. If you are interested in hosting a hustings, Friends of the Earth and The Electoral Commission have useful online guides for organising hustings during elections and how to ensure it is nonpartisan and fair event for all candidates.



Highlighting nature-based solutions

When voters are asked what their most pressing concerns are in the run up to any election, invariably the environment will be partitioned alongside issues such as health and the economy.

However, this ignores the fact that a healthy environment is the basis for everything we do. It cannot, therefore, be boxed off as something we can take or leave depending on the political landscape of the time. In fact, nature features across all other issues we face as a country. Nature-based solutions provide the answers to so many social challenges, which is why it is so important that nature and nature's recovery features heavily in the manifesto pledges of all parties.

Below we have provided some examples of how to weave nature-based solutions into conversations concerning some of the most pressing issues we face in the run up to this General Election.

The cost-of-living crisis

Recent rises in food prices and spiralling energy costs are the two main drivers of the current cost-of-living crisis. Climate change and nature loss will widen existing social and economic divisions and will be felt the hardest by those currently struggling the most. Tackling the nature and climate crisis is tackling the cost-of-living crisis. That is why, two of the Five Priorities (restoring our lost wildlife and tackling the climate emergency) are so important in tackling the current cost-of-living crisis. It is also a means of planning for the future, to help avoid further rises in costs for the most basic essentials which, if not addressed, will simply be exacerbated by the effects of climate change.

To mitigate against the worst impacts of the current cost-of-living crisis, we need to consider two further issues which have been highlighted as particular areas of vulnerability for the UK: food and energy security.

Food security

The UK Food Security Report identifies climate change and biodiversity loss as the two largest threats to food security in the UK in the mid to long term. Farmers are already increasingly subject to pressures arising from drought, flooding, and, to a lesser extent, wildfires. As a direct result, reduced yields are driving increases in food prices. In 2022, UK households experienced average price rises of £400. Due to an exceptionally wet 2023, it has been reported that the UK's food production has been drastically reduced due to flooding, with the UK having to rely more on imports which will drive food prices up further.

Farmers need to be supported to deal with these pressures to make food production sustainable and resistant to the impacts of climate change so that we are less reliant on imports because of extreme weather. Insects are pollinators whose decline also threatens global food security. Pesticide use must be halved by 2030, and all bans on bee-killing and human-health-harming neonicotinoids must be maintained.

Farming at the Sweet Spot is a report published by The Wildlife Trusts and Nature Friendly Farming Network that can be utilised to show how moving to nature-friendly farming can be productive and financially robust for farm businesses across the agricultural sector. Across the 165 farm businesses studied, moving towards a farm system based on Maximum Sustainable Output (MSO) was modelled to result in an average increase of between 10-45% in commercial returns across the different farm types, alongside a reduction of artificial inputs to zero.

The analysis demonstrates that moving towards an approach to farming that works in harmony with nature would help farm businesses become more profitable, increase their resilience to external shocks and stresses, and reduce reliance on inputs such as fossil fuels, fertilisers and animal feed. The budget to support wildlife-friendly farming should therefore be increased to at least £4.4 billion a year. This will ensure the agricultural transition is fair to farmers and better for wildlife, while providing healthier and more affordable food for everyone.

Energy security

Globally, renewable energy is the cheapest form of power. Further oil and gas licensing will not address the cost-of-living crisis. To ensure that the UK is not held hostage to geopolitical developments when addressing its energy needs, we need to invest in renewable energy produced here in the UK so that we are not subject to sudden spikes in energy costs due to external events outside our control. Investing properly will also unlock the economic potential of renewable energy, boosting jobs and local economies. Reports show that in 2023, the UK's net zero economy grew by 9% - in contrast to 0.1% growth of the national economy as a whole.

The UK Government must also shift its focus towards energy efficiency. As previously mentioned, the cheapest and greenest energy is the energy we are not using. In the UK, vast quantities of energy are lost through leaky homes, increasing household bills while needlessly adding to the climate crisis. In fact, energy efficiency in the UK is so poor that one in four pounds spent on heating is wasted due to poor insulation.

Improving energy efficiency in the UK would reduce bills, increase energy security, and reduce the need for untested and highly expensive technologies such as carbon capture and storage. Nature must always be at the heart of the UK's vision for energy security. If the large-scale rollout of infrastructure – whether offshore or onshore – is not properly considered, perverse outcomes will arise. All infrastructure must be spatially targeted, with the avoidance of harm to species and high value wildlife habitats prioritised.

Health

NHS waiting lists are at a record high. Naturally this is an area that comes up repeatedly in lists of voter concerns. Therefore, it is important to draw the link between the NHS in crisis and nature-based solutions. There is strong scientific evidence for the health benefits of a healthy natural environment. Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature leads to a significant increase in wellbeing. In 2009, Natural England estimated that if everyone in England had access to green space, the resulting health benefits would mean that the NHS could save £2.1 billion per year. Updated for inflation that figure would now be around £3 billion.

Independent analysis has found that Wildlife Trusts' health and wellbeing programmes can also save the NHS money and cut reliance on their stretched resources. One project that tackled loneliness and isolation in older people could deliver cost savings to the NHS of £100 million, benefiting the health and wellbeing of 1.2 million people. Therefore, it is important that we emphasise the need for the Government to invest in greener communities and neighbourhoods with easy access to safe natural places for all. We are also calling for the wider promotion of a 'Natural Health Service'. This would incorporate making green prescribing available to everyone that wants it, connecting more people to their natural places, and saving the NHS time and money.

Water quality and flooding

Poor water quality affects every single river, lake, estuary and coastal water in England, and the poor state of our waters has become a doorstep issue for voters.

The main issues include:

- Sewage pollution – almost 4 million hours of sewage released into rivers in 2023.
- Chemical pollution is severe. All of England's waters fail chemical status tests and are not expected to meet standards until 2063.
- Nutrient (phosphate) pollution remains the single biggest reason that waters fail to achieve 'Good Ecological Status'. Farming, through fertiliser and manure use, and the water industry, primarily via treated wastewater, are the major sources of this pollutant.
- Nearly a quarter of English rivers are already at serious risk from unsustainable abstraction. On top of this, demand for water is set to grow whilst climate change will reduce water availability.

Agriculture and the water industry are the two main driving forces behind water pollution in the UK. Discussions, therefore, need to be focused around these two main factors. Communities and organisations need to keep up the pressure on Government and water companies to clean up their act. Regulators should be empowered to punish breaches by companies and enforce fines. The money from these fines should then be used to clean up rivers and avoid the burden being placed on consumers through rising bills.

However, whilst pollution is foremost in the public's mind, risks around water availability are growing. Emphasis should be placed on increasing water efficiency by companies to help customers save water and ensure availability of supplies for new development. Drought action should be allowed sooner, before environmental harm occurs, rather than only when supplies are threatened. Finally, we should ensure water supply plans are climate-proofed by building in the impact on nature of reduced flows. Abstraction from chalk streams should also be reduced to ensure that these globally rare habitats are conserved.

As mentioned above, transitioning to nature-friendly farming methods can reduce pollution from agriculture. However, it also has added benefits of tackling flooding. The movement of water, overland and through the soil, causes the leaching and runoff of farm pollutants. Slowing water movement is key to reducing pollution, and also to soil conservation. Holding water in the landscape reduces flood risk, promotes carbon sequestration and benefits biodiversity. The introduction of beavers into each county should be supported, as it has already been demonstrated that they provide a natural solution to flood risk management.

Planning and housing

There is a finite supply of land in England and many competing aspirations for how it should be used. Government commitments on nature and climate will require significant land use change. The UK has a housing problem. However, it is not newts, impact assessments, or rivers that are to blame, all of which are often used as environmental scapegoats. The Government's own report in 2018 revealed that the source of the UK's housing problem lies in the market; developers cannot provide too many homes at once because this floods the market. So instead, they hold back. The solution is to build the homes people need in the right places and in the right way, using nature and people-centred design to build without harm and contribute to nature's recovery. A Land Use Framework must be delivered to help to ensure that competing priorities are met.

There needs to be increased awareness locally of how individuals can help shape development in their area through viewing and commenting on planning applications, contacting their councillors, and how to argue their objections effectively – with nature in mind. There are guides on responding to planning applications in the recently published [Local Elections 2024 Guide](#).

Urbanisation need not be an issue if done in the right way – with nature and a healthy environment for healthy citizens in mind. New developments now must be compliant with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) rules and guidelines. BNG is an approach to land management that aims to deliver measurable improvements for nature by creating or enhancing wildlife habitats, rivers, streams and hedgerows in association with a new development. Currently it must deliver a minimum of 10% net gain, but we should be pushing for more – 20% or above.

In recent years, the Wildlife Trusts have invested in developing high quality and high integrity solutions to BNG that deliver for both nature and society in perpetuity. At BBOWT we are taking a 'habitat banking' approach to BNG delivery. This allows the creation of strategically located habitats that support large-scale habitat creation projects - identifying the best locations that will help to build and strengthen nature recovery networks and deliver a range of other benefits for wildlife and society.

Reducing air pollution should also be a key issue for planners and developers. Air pollution is one of the biggest environmental threats in the UK and contributes to tens of thousands of deaths every year. The Government should, therefore, be encouraging and facilitating walking and cycling, investing in clean public transport and disincentivising the use of the most polluting vehicles. New developments should have an emphasis placed on clean modes of transport and reduction of traffic and congestion.

Nutrient neutrality

We need homes and we need nature. Housebuilding and nature restoration must not be pitted against one another – both are necessary. Nutrient Mitigation Schemes work effectively to enable housing development without adding pollution to our already damaged rivers. To speed up delivery of solutions, support for Nutrient Mitigation Schemes must be ramped up. In doing so, even greater numbers of new homes can be built without additional pollution entering our most sensitive waterways. The housing crisis cannot be solved at the expense of the nature crisis.



Appendix: Nature cheat sheet

Quick and easy facts to get you talking about the nature and climate crisis.

Knowing facts and statistics about the decline of nature locally and nationally can help you build confidence when speaking with a local councillor, MP or candidate and help you back up the issues with evidence. We have also included an example of how BBOWT is looking to tackle these issues, to demonstrate how it can be done.

1. Bring back our lost wildlife

- The State of Nature report, the most comprehensive report on UK wildlife, shows that the species studied have, on average, declined by 19% since monitoring began in 1970, with nearly 1 in 6 species at risk of becoming extinct.[1]
- 97% of UK wildflower meadows, 90% of wetlands and 70% of ancient woodland have been lost in the last century.
- The Biodiversity Intactness Index puts the UK in the bottom 10% of 240 nations and territories, with just 53% of its biodiversity intact, compared to a global average of 79%.[2]
- **BBOWT's Water Vole Recovery Project** has already helped to increase the local range of water voles by more than 50% over the past 15 years.

2. End river pollution and water scarcity

- Currently, 40% of waters in the UK fail quality targets due to pollution from agriculture and land management.[3]
- The State of Our Rivers 2024 report found that not a single stretch of river in England is in good overall health.[4]
- Of the 86% of inland water bodies which fail to meet targets in England, 36% have been identified as failing directly as a result of sewage and wastewater discharges[5] – at the same time, the profits for water companies in England and Wales have almost doubled since 2019.[6]
- **BBOWT** has joined a wider Wildlife Trusts' campaign calling on the government to create new legislation to give bespoke protections for all chalk streams, hold water companies to account and make polluters pay. The Chalk Streams (Protection) Bill is currently making its way through Parliament.

3. Fund wildlife-friendly farming

- Over 70% of the UK's land is farmed in some way – how this land is managed has a big impact on wildlife. Intensive agriculture is one of the main causes of wildlife declines, as well as the leading cause of river pollution in England.[7]
- In the UK between 1970 and 2020, farmland birds have declined on average by 58%.[8]
- Agriculture accounts for 11% of UK greenhouse gas emissions.[9]
- **BBOWT** has embarked on a £46,000 project to demonstrate how farming can be more wildlife-friendly with less work on a 20-hectare plot of land near Maidenhead in Berkshire. We hope to use the project as a demonstration site when talking to farmers and landowners about the benefits of wildlife-friendly farming techniques.

4. Enable healthy communities

- The NHS could save an estimated £2.1 billion every year in treatment costs if everyone in England had access to good quality green space.[10]
- For every £1 spent on green spaces in England an estimated £7 in additional value for health, wellbeing and the environment is generated.[11]
- Independent economic analysis (July 2023) found that Wildlife Trusts' health and wellbeing programmes save the NHS money and cut reliance on their resources. An investment of £5.34 million would enable The Wildlife Trusts to improve the mental health and wellbeing of 1.2 million people, saving the NHS £635.6 million. [12]
- **BBOWT's 30 Days Wild** campaign, run every June, has been officially backed by the NHS. The health service said that being in or around nature is 'so important for health and happiness' and urged people to get involved.

5. Tackle the climate emergency

- Analysis shows that average global temperatures in 2023 were 1.18 degrees (Celsius) warmer than the 20th-century average - and higher than any other year since records began in 1850. What's more, the 10 warmest years on record have all been in the past decade.[13]
- Research suggests that nature-based solutions such as rewilding and restoring damaged ecosystems, can provide over one-third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed between now and 2030 under the Paris Agreement.[14]
- Green businesses and jobs are booming – in stark contrast to the national economy. A report has found that the UK's net zero economy grew by 9% in 2023 in comparison to 0.1% growth for the economy overall.[15]
- **BBOWT** is one of the partners delivering the Open University's Floodplain Meadows Partnership, which has won a substantial grant from Ecover to help restore 50 hectares of floodplain meadows and research the carbon storage potential of these important habitats along the banks of the River Thames in Oxfordshire.

Additional resources

- [Five Priorities for Nature](#)
- [State of Nature Report](#)
- [Biodiversity Trends Explorer](#)
- [State of Our Rivers Report](#)
- [NHS Forest](#)

1. https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report_2023_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf

2. <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/how-well-are-uk-and-eu-protecting-nature>

3. <https://www.bbwt.org.uk/election-2024/end-river-pollution>

4. <https://theriverstrust.org/rivers-report-2024>

5. <https://www.sas.org.uk/water-quality/water-quality-facts-and-figures/>

6. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/mar/15/water-firms-profits-england-wales-almost-double-since-2019>

7. <https://www.bbwt.org.uk/election-2024/fund-wildlife-friendly-farming>

8. https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report_2023_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf

9. https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report_2023_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf

10. <https://nhsforest.org/about/nhs-forest/#:~:text=In%20England%20alone%2C%20it%20has,to%20good%20quality%20green%20space.&text=Radiographers%20greening%20up%20a%20neglected,Centre%20for%20Sustainable%20Healthcare%202021>

11. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44097-3>

12. https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/23JUN_Health_Report_FINAL%20%281%29.pdf

13. <https://www.conservation.org/stories/climate-change-facts>

14. <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/44/11645>

15. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/feb/27/uk-net-zero-economy-grew-in-2023-report-finds>



**Berkshire
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Wildlife Trust



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