

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's Voluntary National Contribution to Implementation of the UNSPF

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A. UK Domestic Forestry

Trees and woodlands provide numerous environmental, economic, and social benefits. Managed responsibly, they will continue to enhance our quality of life and that of future generations. Currently, around 13% of the UK is covered by woodlands (3.2 million hectares), an increase from a low point of approximately 5% in the early twentieth century. Woodlands occupy 13% land area in the UK, 10% England, 19% in Scotland, 15% in Wales and 9% in Northern Ireland, as per Forestry Statistics 2021.¹ Woodlands are therefore an integral component of the UK's landscape that has evolved over several thousand years of changing land use. To maximise the benefits from woodlands and the resources therein, the UK government has committed to an ambitious target of increasing tree and woodland cover. This is being done as a response to the biodiversity and climate crises.

Although forestry policy is devolved to the individual Administrations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, common standards apply in the UK, including the UK Forestry Standard that underpins forestry regulations, forestry grants and the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (for certification) and the Woodland Carbon Code, which is the voluntary Standard for woodland carbon projects. The devolved administrations also collaborate on forestry research and on plant health.

B. The UK contribution to the achievement of the Global Forest Goals

The UK supports the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017-2030 and is committed to contributing to the achievement of the [Global Forest Goals](#) (GFGs). For detail on each of the relevant GFGs, see Annex A. The UK government continues to support the long-term sustainability of forests, both at the national and international level. The UK's voluntary national contribution (VNC) sets out our contribution to the achievement of the GFGs and builds on the UK's longstanding practice of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). This VNC highlights key targets the UK government has set relating to woodlands in the UK, at the national and devolved government level as a contribution to the achievement of the GFGs. This further demonstrates the UK's leading role in supporting other international forest-related commitments and goals, including the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and actions to address climate change under the Paris Agreement.

C. National Strategies

1. Tree planting or woodland creation targets

The UK government has committed to increasing tree-planting rates across the UK to at least 30,000 hectares per year by the end of the Parliament and to maintain this through to 2050.¹ This reflects a recommendation made by the [Climate Change Committee](#) (CCC) that a significant increase in tree-planting is necessary to manage the climate emergency and to achieve the government's net zero target.

➔ This is a contribution to GFG 1, Target 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3

Policy on trees and woodlands in the UK is a devolved matter. Each of the four nations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) has ambitions to create new woodlands or plant more trees.

¹ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9084/CBP-9084.pdf>

- a) *England* - The [England Trees Action Plan 2021 to 2024](#) (ETAP) committed to at least treble woodland rates by the end of this Parliament, reflecting England’s contribution to meeting the UK’s overall target of planting 30,000 hectares per year by the end of this Parliament. This is supported by the Nature for Climate Fund. The pathway is consistent with the Balanced Net Zero Pathway recommended by the CCC in its advice to Government on setting the Sixth Carbon Budget by 2050.

The eight-week Environmental Targets Public Consultation on statutory tree targets was launched on 16th March 2022. The proposed target would see tree canopy and woodland cover increase from 14.5% to 17.5% of total land area in England by 2050. This target will help achieve government ambitions for nature recovery and to deliver net zero by sequestering approximately 170 megatons of carbon dioxide by 2100.

- b) *Scotland* - The Scottish Government's target is to increase tree cover from 18.8% in 2019 to 21% in 2032. This target is set out in [Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029](#), published in 2019. The target is broken down into creating 10,000 ha of forest and woodland in 2018, 12,000 ha per year from 2020/21, 14,000 ha per year from 2022/23 and 18,000 ha per year by 2024. This target is further reinforced in the recently published [Programme for Government 2021-22](#).
- c) *Wales* - The Welsh Government published a strategy for woodland and trees, [Woodlands for Wales](#), in 2018. The Government set an aspiration of 100,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030, and 180,000 hectares by 2050 to meet the ‘balanced pathway’ set out by the UK Climate Change Commission and to help Wales meet its carbon emission reduction targets. This target equates to the planting of 43,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030, at least 5,000 hectares per year.²
- d) *Northern Ireland* - The Northern Ireland Executive launched a Forests for the Future programme in March 2020 pledging to help tackle climate change by planting 18 million trees over the next 10 years, “10 for every person in Northern Ireland by 2030”.

2. Financial Commitments and Funding Initiatives

The four UK nations have made several financial commitments and developed various tree planting and woodland creation initiatives.

- a) *England* - The England Trees Action Plan has committed to treble tree planting rates in England by the end of this Parliament, supported by an intended £500m from the Nature for Climate Fund. In the Net Zero Strategy launched in October 2021, the Government has also announced that it will boost the existing £640m Nature for Climate fund with a further £124 million of new money, ensuring total spend of more than £750 million by 2025 on peat restoration, woodland creation and management – above and beyond what was promised in the manifesto.

Other existing initiatives to fund tree planting in England include:

- i. [England Woodland Creation Offer](#): Offers support to landowners, land managers and public bodies to create new woodland, including through natural colonisation, on areas as small as one hectare.

² <https://gov.wales/written-statement-trees-and-timber>

- ii. [Woodland Carbon Guarantee](#): This is a £50 million scheme aimed to help accelerate woodland creation by providing the option to sell carbon credits to the Government or on the open market.
- iii. [Urban Tree Challenge Fund](#): The initiative supports the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and contributes to its pledge to plant one million urban trees by 2022. It was funded with £10 million in 2018, and the first and second rounds led to the planting of some 134,000 new trees in urban areas in England. In the third round, £6 million of funding from the Nature for Climate Fund was availed to support the planting of 44,000 trees in 2021/22. The current cycle has a planting budget of £3.8 million for the coming planting season of 2022/23.
- iv. [Protected Areas](#): The Government announced in November 2020 that it was providing £80 million in funding towards the creation of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as well as 10 Landscape Recovery projects. This included £40 million in further funding for the [Green Recovery Challenge Fund](#), announced in September 2020. The Fund aims to retain and create jobs in "tree planting, environmental education and the restoration of damaged habitats, such as peatlands and wetlands".
- v. [The Queen's Green Canopy](#): Is a UK-wide tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022, by inviting people to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee".

The UK Government's new [Sustainable Farming Incentive](#), [Local Nature Recovery](#) and [Landscape Recovery](#) schemes will provide the main mechanism for publicly funded woodland creation after 2024 and will be informed by a new target.

- b) *Scotland* - Funding for tree planting is provided through the [Forestry Grant Scheme](#) (FGS). The FGS offers financial support for the creation of new woodland and the sustainable management of existing woodland. Within the scheme, there are a range of support options covering planting, woodland protection, harvesting and more. During the Scottish Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, £252 million was made available through the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) to support [woodland creation](#) and [improvement and sustainable management of existing woodlands](#). In 2021, a total budget of £64.3 million was allocated while £71.5 million has been allocated for 2022.

In the recently published [Programme for Government 2021-22](#), £22 million has been allocated for the restoration of degraded peatlands in 2021-22 as part of the government's £250 million commitment to restore 250,000 hectares by 2030, and £150 million to accelerate progress towards the Scottish government's commitment for 18,000 hectares of tree planting a year by 2024.

- c) *Wales* - The Welsh Government provides funding for woodland creation through [Glastir](#), the Welsh Government's sustainable land management scheme. It is funded by the Welsh Government's Rural Development Programme 2014-20 (extended to 2023). In July 2021, The Welsh government opened applications for the first round of [The Woodland Investment Grant](#) (TWIG). This scheme provides financial support for people to create new woodland or to make improvements to existing woodlands that meet the standards of the [National Forest](#). In the first window, a capital budget of £2.5 million, plus a revenue budget of £250,000 was allocated to the scheme.

- d) *Northern Ireland* - Woodland creation in Northern Ireland is funded through the Rural Development Programme of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). By end of 2020, the Department had committed £6.4 million of grant aid to support woodland creation, including new native, other broadleaf and predominantly coniferous woodland.

Below are the initiatives through which woodland creation in Northern Ireland is being funded:

- i. **Small Woodland Grant Scheme**: The Small Woodland Grant Scheme is specifically for new native woodland planting of 0.20 hectares and larger. The scheme provides a fixed area-based payment for woodland establishment, a fencing grant and where eligible annual premia for 10 years.
- ii. **Forest Expansion Scheme**: The Forest Expansion Scheme is for new woodland planting of three hectares and larger. Successful applicants to the scheme receive up to 100% of eligible establishment costs and annual premia for 10 years.
- iii. **Forest Protection Scheme - Ash Dieback**: aims to encourage sustainable management of woodlands that may be affected by the disease.

D. International Contributions

At the international level, the UK government continues to play a significant role in supporting other countries and stakeholders to meet their own forest-related targets. Below are some examples of how the UK is contributing to the achievement of GFGs internationally.

1. Forests and the Glasgow Leaders Declaration

The UK continues to take a leading role in working with global partners to halt and reverse forest loss. At COP26, the UK led the way in securing agreement from over 140 world leaders to work together to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030 under the Glasgow Leader's Declaration on Forests and Land Use. The declaration emphasizes “the critical and interdependent roles of forests of all types, biodiversity and sustainable land use in enabling the world to meet its sustainable development goals; helping achieve a balance between anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and removal by sinks; adapting to climate change and maintaining other ecosystem services”. This was backed by almost £14 billion of public and private funding, and signatory countries account for 91% of the world's forests. The declaration and financial pledges are a reaffirmation of global efforts to tackle the loss of nature and hence a contribution to meeting the GFGs.

The UK Government has doubled its international climate finance to £11.6 billion for the period from 2021 to 2026, of which at least £3 billion will be spent on nature, including solutions that protect, restore and sustainably manage forests.

➔ This contributes to GFG 3, Targets 3.1 and 3.2 and GFG 4, Targets 4.1 and 4.2.

2. Nature Finance

Investing, mobilizing and shifting flows of finance to forests is a vital part of the overall nature finance space, important for supporting climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as enabling livelihoods and biodiversity co-benefits. At COP26 the UK worked towards systemic change in favour

of a forest positive future, where agricultural production will be decoupled from deforestation. At COP26, the UK:

- Secured commitments from over 30 financial institutions representing ~\$8.7 trillion in AUM to tackle commodity-driven deforestation impacts in their investment and lending portfolios. The signatory organisations will individually create organisational plans, milestones, and incentives to meet the proposed timelines, aligned with a Paris Agreement-compliant 1.5°C pathway.
- Worked with regulators to secure acknowledgement of the risk that deforestation poses to the financial sector, as well as nature's overall importance in achieving net-zero. This includes the TCFD's acknowledgement of the AFOLU sector's significance in achieving climate objectives, as well as the NGFS and Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action joint recognition of the interplay between nature and climate objectives.
- Demonstrated that natural capital is a viable and attractive asset class, helping to launch 3 initiatives to bring such investments to scale, with \$4.1 billion already committed to natural capital and with future plans for much more.

➔ This is a direct contribution to GFG 4, Target 4.1 and Target 4.2.

3. FACT Dialogue

The Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue is a group of over 28 major producer and consumer governments that have agreed to work together to protect forests and other critical ecosystems, supporting the shift in the global trade in agricultural commodities towards sustainability. At COP26 the FACT [Roadmap of action](#) was launched by Prime Minister Johnson of the UK and President Jokowi of Indonesia as co-chairs of the Dialogue on behalf of the 28 governments. The FACT Roadmap covers four key themes across trade and market development, transparency and traceability, smallholder support and research, development and innovation. It sends a strong signal globally that we are committed to work together on building a path that promotes sustainable trade and development.

➔ This is a contribution to GFG 1, Target 1.3, and GFG 2, Target 2.3.

4. Due Diligence Legislation

The UK has introduced world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Act to help tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains. This new law is one part of a wider package of measures to improve the sustainability of our supply chains and will contribute to global efforts to protect forests and other ecosystems. Our law will make it illegal for larger businesses operating in the UK to use key forest risk commodities produced on land illegally occupied or used. Businesses in scope will also be required to undertake a due diligence exercise on their supply chains, and to report on this exercise annually. To ensure transparency, information about businesses' due diligence exercises will be published. Businesses in scope that do not comply with these requirements may be subject to fines and other civil sanctions. We ran a consultation from 3 December 2021 to 11 March 2022 to seek views on the details of regulations that will implement the Environment Act provisions, to ensure that these are designed effectively. The Government aims to publish a summary of responses within 12 weeks of the consultation's close.

➔ This is a contribution to GFG 1, Target 1.3.

5. The 30by30 Initiative

As part of our efforts to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and critical ecosystems, the UK is actively championing the global commitment to protect at least 30% of the land and of the ocean by 2030 through a global network of Protected Areas and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs). We are working closely with global partners to deliver an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF) that includes the 30by30 global target for land and ocean at CBD COP15 in 2022. In support of the 30by30 target, the UK leads the Global Ocean Alliance (GOA) and is the Ocean Co-Chair (alongside France and Costa Rica) of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (HAC). While the GOA champions the 30by30 ocean target, the HAC champions 30by30 for both land and ocean. As of March 2022, the GOA is over 70 countries strong and the HAC is over 90 countries strong. Under the UK's Presidency in 2021, the G7 also committed to supporting the global 30by30 target, and to implement this domestically.

- a) **Ocean** - Between the HAC and GOA, over 100 countries now support a 30by30 target for the ocean, and we are inviting all countries to join us. Evidence indicates that effective protection of at least 30% of the global ocean will help to reverse adverse ecological impacts, preserve fish populations, increase resilience to climate change, and sustain long-term ocean health. It also serves as a good example of a nature-based solution/ecosystem-based approach. We believe that the global network of MPAs should include both highly protected sites and those that deliver conservation outcomes alongside sustainable economic activities (i.e. the sustainable use of resources). It is also important that those areas outside national jurisdiction are included in the delivery of this global target. That is why the UK is also seeking the final agreement of a new Treaty under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- b) **Land**: The UK recognises that a variety of area-based conservation approaches will be needed to achieve the 30by30 target, including providing support to strengthen and expand protected and conserved areas, and to explore the potential to complement these areas through OECMs. OECMs are a way of recognising areas for which nature conservation is not necessarily the primary management objective, but where nature is nevertheless effectively conserved. In line with the COP26 IPLC Forest Tenure Joint Donor Statement, the UK is committed to including and consulting indigenous people and local communities (IPLCs) on the implementation of the CBD post 2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF) in such a way as to ensure the respect, preservation and maintenance of knowledge, innovations, and sustainable practices of Indigenous Peoples, including through strengthening land tenure systems and protecting their land and resource rights in accordance with relevant national legislation and international instruments. The UK's view is that it is possible to reach the 30by30 target in a way that is both effective and equitable, and we are committed to ensuring that the negotiated outcome at COP15 reflects this.

➔ The 30by30 initiative is a direct contribution to GFG 3, *Target 3.1*.

6. Other Types of Forests

The UK government supports several programmes which protect and restore diverse types of forests. This includes the 'Blue Forests Initiative' in Madagascar and Indonesia, which works with local coastal communities to protect and restore mangrove habitat, create new sustainable

livelihoods, support community health and women's empowerment and increase climate resilience. The programme is projected to protect over 180,000 hectares of mangrove forests; deliver over 7.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide savings; benefit 86,000 people through new sustainable livelihoods; and create a successful model for replication.

➔ This is a contribution to GFGs 1, *Target 1.3*, and GFG 4, *Target 4.1*.