

Protecting and enhancing our natural environment

Our commitment to you:

We set ourselves the goal of being the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than that in which we found it. This is a big ambition to which we remain committed. We will:

- *put in place a new 'Blue Belt' to **protect precious marine habitats***
 - *invest in **cleaner air and water** for you and your family*
 - ***keep our forests in trust for the nation***
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For Conservatives, Britain's 'green and pleasant land' is not some relic from a bygone era, to be mourned and missed: it's the living, breathing backdrop to our national life. Our moors and meadows, wildlife and nature, air and water are a crucial part of our national identity and make our country what it is. So we care about them deeply, want to protect them for everyone and pass them onto future generations.

Labour never understood this. Our rural communities fell further behind urban areas; biodiversity suffered, with important species and habitats declining under their watch; and they failed to protect the Green Belt.

Over the last five years, we have committed billions of pounds to reduce emissions from transport and clean up our rivers and seas. We have done more to protect our seas, safeguarded our Green Belt and planted 11 million trees. And we set out a comprehensive, long-term vision to protect our natural heritage in this country's first White Paper on the Natural Environment for 20 years.

Over the next five years, we will put in place stronger protections for our natural landscapes, establish a new Blue Belt to safeguard precious marine habitats, launch a programme of pocket parks in towns and cities and continue to lead in tackling the illegal wildlife trade. Our plan is to conserve and enhance our natural environment so that this remains the most beautiful country in the world.

Our plan of action:

We will protect your countryside, Green Belt and urban environment

We will spend £3 billion from the Common Agricultural Policy to enhance England's countryside over the next five years, enabling us, among other things, to clean up our rivers and lakes, protect our stonewalls and hedges, and help our bees to thrive. We will ensure that our public forests and woodland are kept in trust for the nation and plant another 11 million trees. We will make it easier to access our beautiful landscapes, by providing free, comprehensive maps of all open-access green space. Building on our introduction of a five pence charge on single-use plastic bags, we will review the case for higher Fixed Penalty Notices for littering and allow councils to tackle small-scale fly-tipping through Fixed Penalties rather than costly prosecutions. We will launch an ambitious programme of pocket parks – small areas of inviting public space where people can enjoy relief from the hustle and bustle of city streets. We will protect the Green Belt, and maintain national protections for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other environmental designations.

We will help you enjoy cleaner air and water

We will continue to do even more to tackle air pollution and clean up our rivers and waterways, including supporting the Thames Tideway Tunnel. We have spent over £3 billion on improving flood defences, and capped the cost of flood insurance. We will now go further, building 1,400 new flood defence schemes, to protect 300,000 homes.