

September 2026

Strong Roots

The role of nature in uniting voter
coalitions



**More in
Common**

In partnership with



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More in Common retained full editorial independence when drafting this report and so the views outlined in this report should be seen as being reflective of the authors and More in Common, rather than the aforementioned funders of this research.

Executive summary

More in Common research has consistently found that nature and green spaces are one of the largest sources of pride for Britons in their local area, that they care deeply about protecting the countryside and are opposed to planning reforms which pit nature against development.

There can be no doubts over Britons' love for nature and wildlife. But there is an assumption held by many in Westminster that this love for nature and wildlife sits separately from how Britons vote. As a result many politicians think nature should not be a priority for those running, or seeking to run, national governments and local councils.

Amid a Summer of successive heatwaves, wildfires and droughts in which Britons have seen their natural environment under strain, More in Common has partnered with five of Britain's largest nature conservation charities to build an understanding of the politics of nature in Britain.

Based on a survey of 2,006 Britons in August and three focus groups of swing voters in the constituencies of Makerfield, Dorking and Horley and Enfield North, this research demonstrates that across the political spectrum, Britons' love for nature runs deep. Politicians should be cautious of failing to recognise this in policy presentation and design.

Key findings include:

Britons love and care for nature, but they feel it is under threat and are worried about nature's decline in Britain.

Britons' love for nature **extends across the political spectrum**. While many make the link between climate change and nature, those who are more sceptical about climate action still care deeply about protecting nature and wildlife.

Britons **reject the binaries** that many commentators and campaigners sometimes pit nature on one side of. They think that the government is capable of both protecting nature and giving other significant priorities, like the cost of living, the attention they deserve. They don't see the protection of nature as being in conflict with development. But when politicians do force them to confront a trade-off, they firmly side with nature protection over development.

Britons feel that **politicians and political parties aren't doing enough** to protect wildlife and nature. Most feel this is an issue those in power don't care about.

Through a conjoint experiment we demonstrate that **politicians' views on nature protection, if known, actively shape voters' perceptions**. There is a real electoral risk for

politicians deemed to be soft on the protection of nature. The report sets out the electoral risks and opportunities this raises for each of Britain's five major political parties:

- For **Labour**, the research shows that the last government's planning reforms were among their most unpopular policies. While awareness of these reforms is low, if this were to change, it could bring meaningful negative electoral consequences.
- For **Reform UK**, the research shows that while the party's anti-net zero stance commands support among their voters, they do have strong expectations nature protection. Perceptions of Reform and Nigel Farage as not caring about nature represent an electoral Achilles' heel.
- For the **Conservative Party**, the research shows that while their voters may be split on net zero, they are united in their care for nature. The party's failure to articulate its vision in this space could restrict its recovery, particularly in the 'Blue Wall.'
- For the **Liberal Democrats** the research shows intense importance of nature for their voters and suggests that a failure to communicate the party's policies and solutions on nature protection represent a missed opportunity to build a national brand and purpose for the party.
- For the **Green Party**, the research shows that despite their shift in emphasis under Zack Polanski's leadership, care for nature and wildlife is still seen as the party's core strength. This suggests the party should seek to ensure its newly widened focus builds on rather than replaces this.

Chapter 1 | Britons deeply value nature

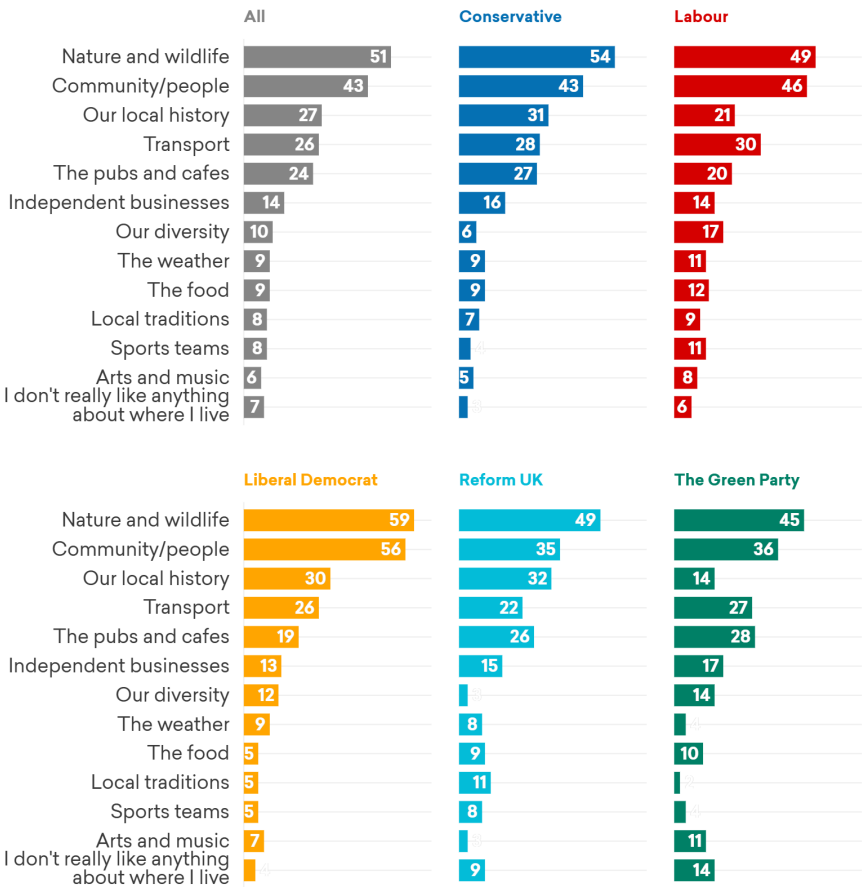
Across the local spectrum nature is a source of local pride

Across Britain, from towns to cities, villages to suburbs, what Britons like most about where they live is the nature and wildlife around them. In fact, almost half (46 per cent) of Britons say that nature and wildlife is their favourite thing about where they live, above community (36 per cent) and transport (25 per cent).

This remains consistent across regions in the UK, all voter groups and segments of the population. Britons may seem increasingly polarised on the big issues facing the country and world, but are united by their shared love of and value they place on nature.

Across every party, nature and wildlife is what Britons like locally

What, if anything, do you like most about where you live?



Nature is also the largest source of pride in place for Britons. Two fifths of Britons (40 per cent) name nature and wildlife as the thing that makes them most proud of where they live - and it is the top source of local pride for voters of every major party. Again, this remains consistently high across rural and urban areas in the UK.

In focus group conversations, when participants are asked what they enjoy most about their area, they arrive at the countryside, green space and wildlife without prompting. They talk passionately and emotionally about the importance of being able to access nature for their wellbeing and the value they place on ensuring the next generation build its own connection and appreciation of nature.

Just the scenery really. There's a lovely lake at the Three Sisters. You can kind of escape the town and get away from it on the walks.

Christine, Retail Worker, Makerfield

My favourite thing about Enfield, I'm going to have to say Forty Hall because I've also got a dog and I like the new river path that they've now done that runs from Enfield all the way to Cheshunt. So, I like going along that.

Samantha, Psychotherapist, Enfield

I'm right on the edge of Hawley, so I've got some really lovely dog walks, and I volunteer at the local rescue centre, which is only about a mile away.

Julie, Duty Manager, Dorking and Horley

But Britons feel nature is in decline

However, despite nature being something that clearly a majority of Britons care about deeply, almost half (48 per cent) say that it is currently in decline in the UK. When asked to describe nature in the UK in a few words, alongside beauty and admiration, words like decline, concern and loss feature prominently in responses.

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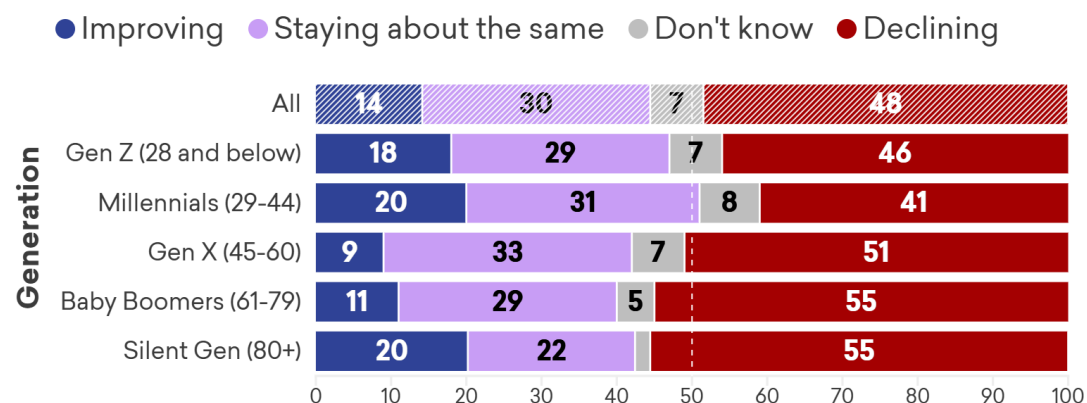
Alice, Occupational Therapist, Dorking and Horley

I was having this conversation with my kids a few days ago, when I used to grow up with my brother where we used to play football and all the fields that we used to play football on have now got houses built on them. And that's just closing in from where we were growing up 20, 30 years ago.

7

Nearly half of Britons say nature is declining

How would you describe the state of nature in the UK? In comparison to previous generations, nature in the UK is...



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Declines in natural environments are driving wider feelings of decline in Britain

For many Britons the decline they see in nature locally is emblematic of wider feelings of decline. Litter, fly-tipping and the loss of local green space all contribute to a general sense that their area is overlooked and on the decline.

The whole borough, the area that I live in has totally gone downhill [...] Years ago, the air quality was much better out there. Now it's not so pure [...] you can smell the difference from 15, 20 years ago.

Marlon, Fashion Industry, Enfield

Those who see nature as declining in the UK primarily say they see this through pollution in rivers, litter, fly-tipping and the loss of local habitats. At the local level, it is clear that many see the threat to local wildlife and green spaces up close.

I think the litter has got really out of control in the local parks. You'll walk down there and it'll just be just disgusting [...] I think maybe some people have lost a bit of respect for their local area, which is a real shame.

Katya, Teacher Training, Enfield

I think it's a lack of respect in people as well. There's littering everywhere. There's fighting everywhere. There's drugs everywhere [...] Everything is just dropping and people just get complacent and there's no standards.

Steve, Welding Automation, Makerfield

Everywhere you go now, there's poverty, there's rubbish on the floor. People are not respectful for the area.

Sophie, Carer, Makerfield

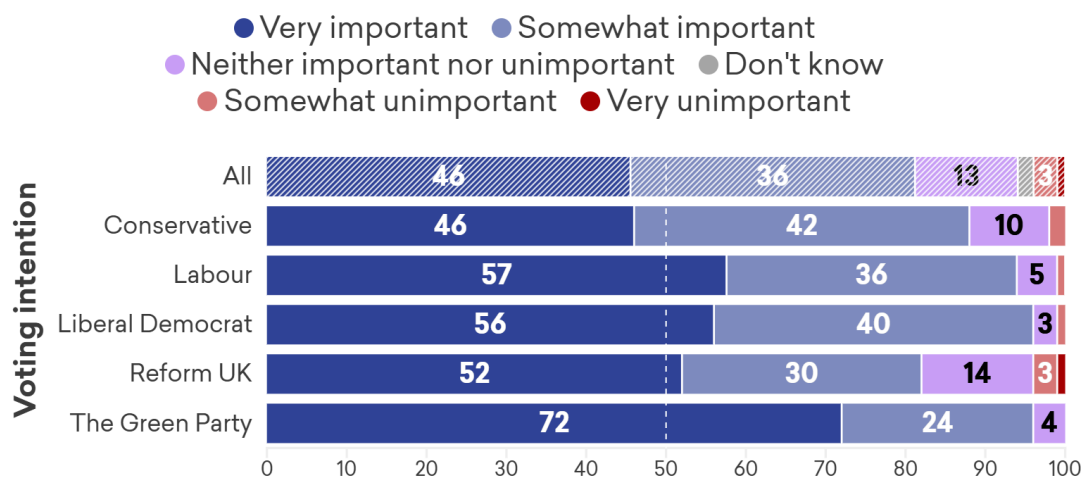
Britons are united on the importance of protecting nature

Simply put, protecting nature and wildlife is important to almost everyone in Britain.

Nearly nine in ten (89 per cent) say it is important to them personally, including more than half (53 per cent) who say it is very important. Just two per cent say it is unimportant. That consensus runs across the political spectrum: from 82 per cent of Reform voters and 87 per cent of Conservative voters to 93 per cent of Labour voters and 96 per cent of both Liberal Democrat and Green voters. There are very few areas of British politics that have such broad and robust consensus.

8 in 10 Reform voters say protecting nature and wildlife matters to them personally

How important is protecting nature and wildlife to you personally?



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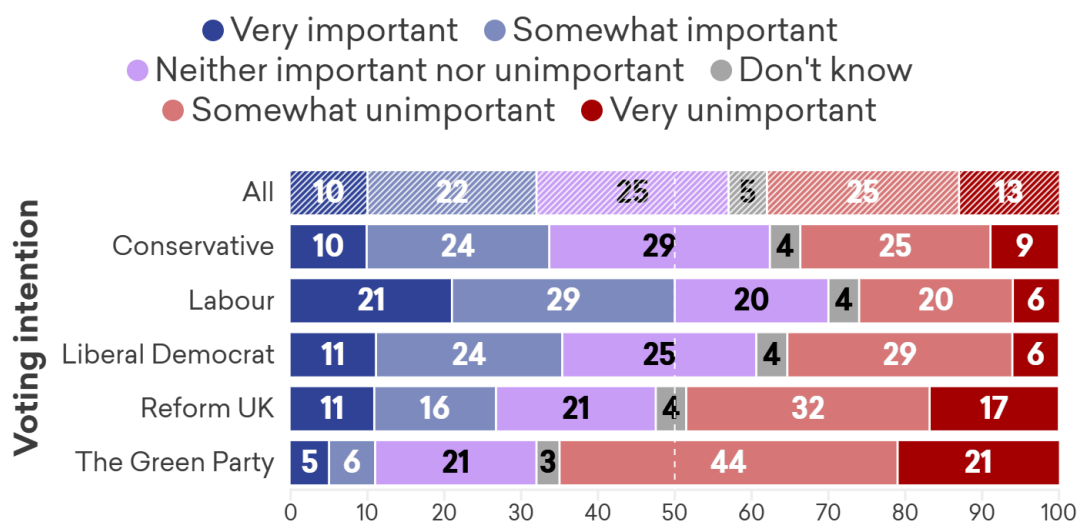
Britons feel protecting nature is less of a priority for politicians

Despite their own love of nature, most Britons do not feel as though this is shared by politicians or in political priorities. They are more likely to think protecting nature is unimportant to politicians than important: just over a third (35 per cent) say politicians see it as important, whereas 39 per cent say they do not.

By party, Green voters are by far the most disillusioned with the lack of interest shown by politicians in nature. 65 per cent of Green voters say that it seems like protecting nature and wildlife is unimportant to politicians. Reform voters have a similarly disparaging outlook, with 49 per cent saying the same. The only voter group with a majority who think politicians do care about nature are Labour, with 50 per cent saying so.

Just a third of Britons think protecting nature matters to politicians

To what extent do you think protecting nature and wildlife is important or unimportant to politicians in the UK?



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In conversation, that gap is not expressed as anger but as disappointment. That disappointment then in turn feeds a wider conviction that politicians do not understand what ordinary people want.

It should be, but it won't be. Like I say, I might not be listening about things, but I don't hear nothing about nature and stuff like that. There's no places to go and see it.

Jack, Auto electrics, Makerfield

For others it goes further and perceived political neglect of nature becomes intertwined with anger at the Westminster elite more generally, feeding the sensation that politicians care about their own area or cities, but not the rest of the country. Far from sitting apart from the anti-system sentiment in British politics today, neglect of nature is a driver of the feeling of an alienated 'us' from a superior (and out of touch) 'them'.

I think [politicians] care about [nature and wildlife] where they live and in their area. But if it's not in their backyard, I don't think they care. They're not bothered.

Christine, Retail Assistant, Makerfield

Across focus group conversations, several participants said that nature is not prioritised by politicians as it does not benefit them, particularly financially. To others, when politicians talk about nature protection, it's vague, inauthentic and likely only done to win votes.

It's almost a strategic mentioning of 'let's preserve wildlife'. And actually, the reality is that that's not going to meet national needs and they're not going to progress with that. So yeah, they mention it to get votes, but actually we won't see anything materialise.

Alice, Occupational Therapist, Dorking and Horley

This means a significant portion of the public feels alienated by politicians who, to them, do not care about the thing they most like about where they live, and which gives them the most pride in their area.

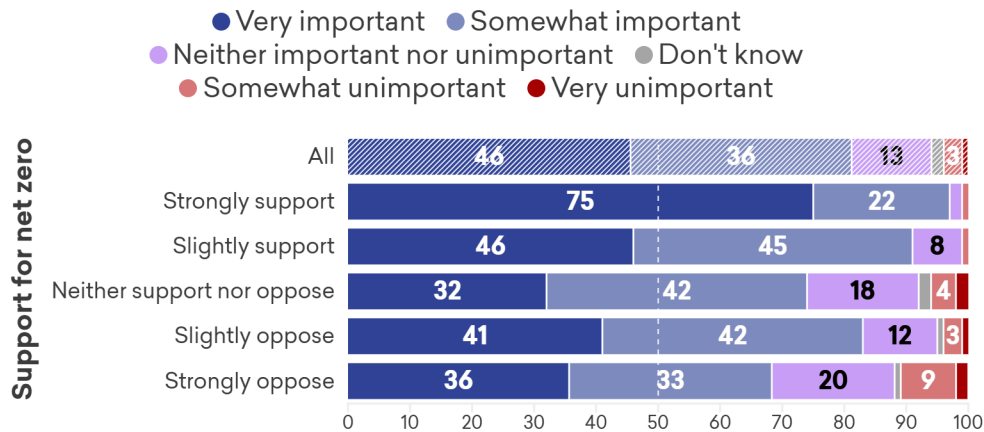
Britons who are sceptical of climate action still want to protect nature

Concern for local nature does not simply match support for climate action. It extends well beyond it.

Among Britons who support the government's net zero target, more than nine in ten (94 per cent) say protecting nature is important to them. Among those who oppose the government's net zero target, three quarters (74 per cent) say the same, with two fifths (38 per cent) saying it is very important. Even among those who strongly opposed to the government's net zero target, 69 per cent say protecting nature matters to them personally.

Even those who strongly oppose net zero say protecting nature matters to them

How important is protecting nature and wildlife to you personally?



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Protecting nature therefore offers a far broader starting point than climate policy. It reaches a bigger constituency than climate, and particularly net zero which is more polarising. In short nature offers an entry point into environmental action for campaigners and advocates.

For many nature feels much more tangible. In conversation, people discuss walking their dogs along the canal, playing with their children in the park, or taking respite from the frenetic pace of modern life.

I think it's important to invest in the future and the future is our children. And I think you can't have enough green space for the children to kick around a ball, to do cricket. We used to have youth clubs when we were younger.

Sophie, Carer, Makerfield

Mental health struggles are rife and that is very under-resourced [...] And there's a link there between nature and wellbeing.

Alice, Occupational Therapist, Dorking and Horley

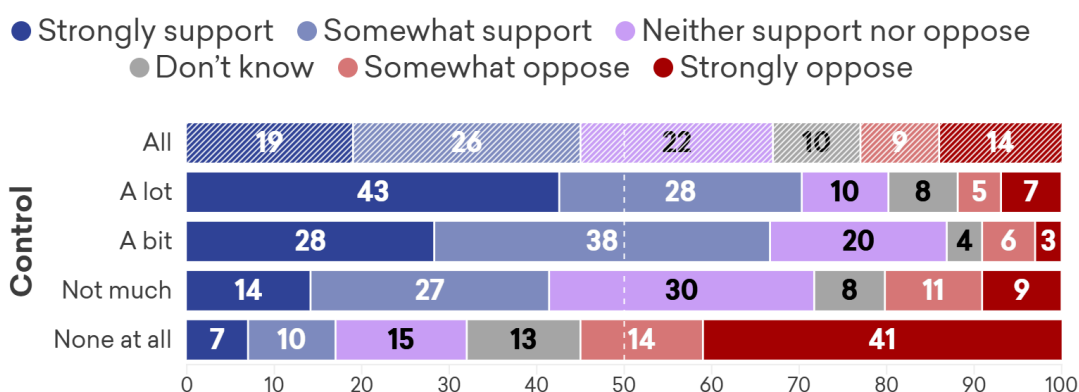
While some Britons make links between international climate change and the quality of local nature, to many local nature is the more immediate and meaningful thing to prioritise. In contrast, many feel global climate issues feel like something they lack personal agency over. Many also question the extent to which the UK government can make progress on

tackling climate change. In contrast, local nature protection feels more tangible and more possible to do something about.

To demonstrate this, among Britons who believe government has a lot of control over climate change, there are high levels of support for the government's net zero target, at seven in ten. Conversely, those who think the government has no control at all over the impacts of climate change have very low levels of support for the government's net zero target at just 17 per cent.

Britons who think the government has little control over climate change are unlikely to support net zero

To what extent do you support or oppose the UK's target of becoming Net Zero by 2050?



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Full question wording for Y axis: How much control, if any, do you think the British Government has over the impacts of climate change on the UK?

Similarly, climate action often feels ineffective on an individual scale when to many, international climate agreements seem to have little to no immediate outcomes. Instead, local nature can often have a clearer and simpler solution.

If you look at what certain countries are still emitting with fossil fuel carbon dioxide, the rest of us can do everything that we can and switch to renewables. But ultimately, I think it's probably going to be too late [...] we can do what we can now, but it's probably only going to mitigate where we've got to.

Peter, Energy Consultant, Dorking and Horley

Where global climate action feels remote and its outcomes unclear, protecting a local river or forest has a visible actor, a clear action and a tangible result.

For more right-leaning voters in particular, scepticism about climate action should not be mistaken for indifference to the environment. Many hold the two apart as separate issues, and continue to treat nature protection as a priority.

I think we should have respect for the planet we live on. We should recycle and we should look after our environment and nature, and it should be done to look after the planet, but I don't like all those things that we have to do because of climate change.

Candela, Reform Voter, Dissenting Disruptor, Stretford and Urmston¹

Retreat from climate commitments could become potentially damaging if they are read as a retreat from protection of nature. While the leadership of Reform and the Conservatives oppose the government's net zero target, 82 per cent of Reform voters and 87 per cent of Conservative voters say protecting nature matters to them personally. If that policy platform is seen by voters as indifference to nature rather than just scepticism about net zero, the parties could alienate their base - and the overwhelming majority of Britons - who clearly and dearly care about nature.

¹ This quote is from a separate focus group completed for our report on Britons' attitudes towards heatwaves in July. Link here [<https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/research/6144-2/>]

Chapter 2 | The implications for policy development on nature

The previous chapter demonstrated the clear importance of nature to Britons. This has several implications for British politics, particularly where nature interacts with other big issues. This section explores how nature interacts with other priorities of the British public.

The biggest issues facing the country don't leave much room for other important issues like nature

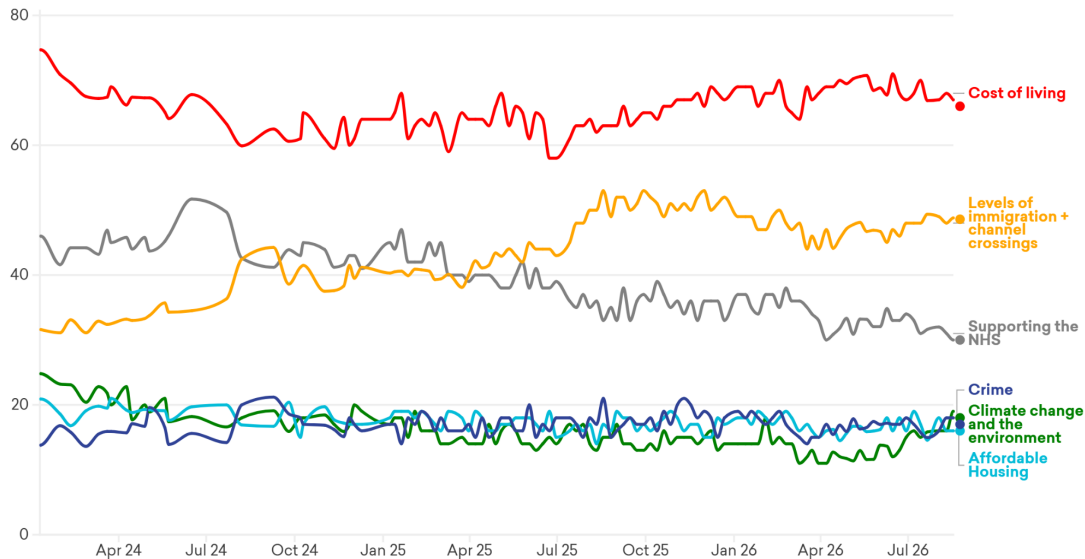
In conversation, local nature is undoubtedly important to most Britons, and often the lens through which they experience either local progress or decline. Fly-tipping in a local park, trolleys in the town river or the loss of local green space often create a feeling to Britons that their area is in decline, or perhaps not as pleasant as it once was.

However, it is worth contextualising this with the importance given to many other issues facing Britons today. Tracking the biggest issues in Britain over the last three years shows that the majority of Britons continue to rank the cost of living crisis as their number one issue. Two-thirds of Britons say that the cost of living is one of the most important issues facing the country today, over four times as many as the 15 per cent who name climate and the environment as a major issue.

Climate and the environment, however, is comparable to other important but second order issues such as affordable housing, which is a top issue for 16 per cent of Britons. Both affordable housing and the environment are also disproportionately important issues to the youngest generation, Gen-Z, of whom 23 per cent say affordable housing is one of the biggest issues facing the country today and a further 19 per cent say climate and the environment.

Britons' big issues over time

In your opinion, which are the most IMPORTANT issues facing the country today? Please select up to three



Latest fieldwork: 21-23 August 2026

In discussion, many people readily admit that while they do care deeply for nature, it's one of many issues that the country faces at the moment.

If you look at the breadth of the issues that the country's facing, unfortunately, it's going to be very low down on the priority list for the majority of people.

Alice, Occupational Therapist, Dorking and Horley

There are more important issues, I suppose, but it shouldn't be neglected.

Christine, Retail Assistant, Makerfield

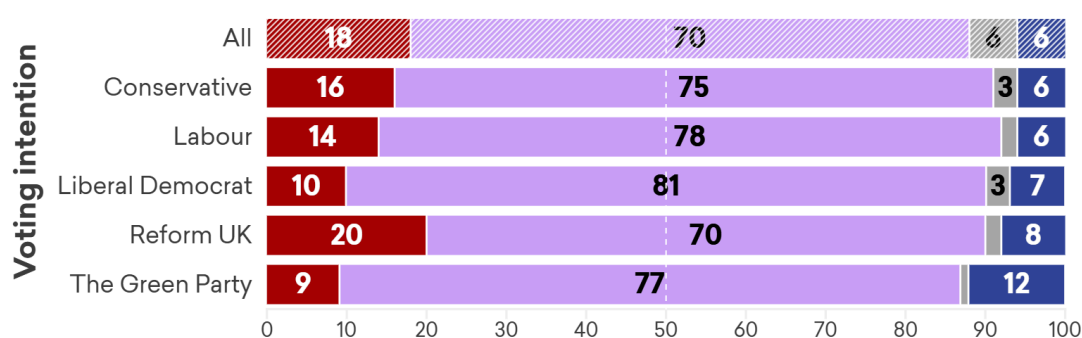
Britons think politicians can both address the big issues and protect nature

By and large the public reject the idea that the government can only prioritise one thing. Asked whether the government can protect nature during the cost of living crisis, three quarters of Britons believe that the government should be able to deal with both and should treat both as top priorities.

Three quarters of Britons reject the trade-off between nature and the cost of living

Thinking about how much the current government should prioritise protecting nature, which of the following comes closest to your view?

- When the cost of living is so high the government cannot afford to treat protecting nature as a top priority
- The government can protect both nature and tackle the cost of living crisis so both should be top priorities
- Don't know
- Protecting nature is so important that it has to be the top priority above tackling the cost of living



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This belief is held across parties, with 70 per cent of Reform voters and 75 per cent of Labour voters say that the government should be able to both balance the needs of nature and get the economy back on track. Creating a false dichotomy in which one must be sacrificed for the other is unlikely to land well with Britons who reject this zero-sum approach.

I think it's madness you're even talking about having to trade off important issues against each other. It's just insane. That's madness to me.

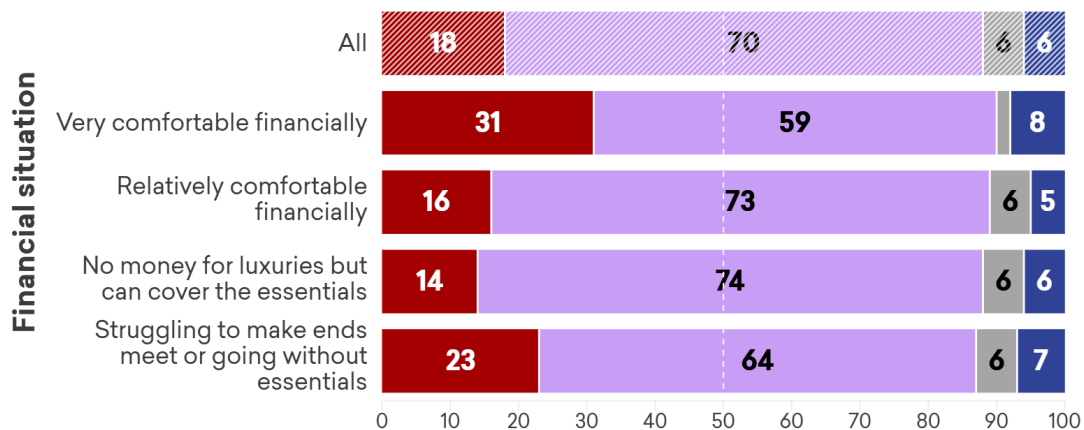
Will, SME Owner, Dorking and Horley

The pattern is similar whether Britons are financially struggling or more comfortable. Across the income spectrum Britons continue to reject a need to prioritise tackling the cost of living over protecting nature. Interestingly, the group of Britons most likely to say that the government has to prioritise the economy are those who are most financially well off.

Those who are financially most comfortable are the most likely to say the government needs to make trade-offs with nature

Thinking about how much the current government should prioritise protecting nature, which of the following comes closest to your view?

- When the cost of living is so high the government cannot afford to treat protecting nature as a top priority
- The government can protect both nature and tackle the cost of living crisis so both should be top priorities
- Don't know
- Protecting nature is so important that it has to be the top priority above tackling the cost of living



However, when forced to choose whether the government should concentrate solely on the economy or nature conservation, the more immediate, tangible and material issue that will have a greater impact on Britons' quality of life, is the cost of living.

If I'm honest, I feel the country's in a mess from top to bottom. So, with the greater scheme of things like the other issues that people have mentioned, the other issues are seemingly more important than the nature side of things [...] I think there's huge issues out there, bigger issues that impact on lives maybe more than the nature.

Will, SME Owner, Dorking and Horley

When you're brought in, you look at how much money's got to be in your pocket [...] and then you probably look at environmental issues after that. That's the way I look at things.

Steve, Welding Automation, Makerfield

The immediate priority, like people have said, is social care services, NHS, all of those under-resourced, understaffed, very precious, very needed services for people to maintain their wellbeing. So, like you say, you have to balance that.

Alice, Occupational Therapist, Dorking and Horley

While local nature clearly brings benefits to Britons, such as improving mental health and giving them space to play and relax, many feel they are so short of breathing room that they simply can't afford to devote the headspace they would like to thinking about nature protection.

What do Britons want to protect?

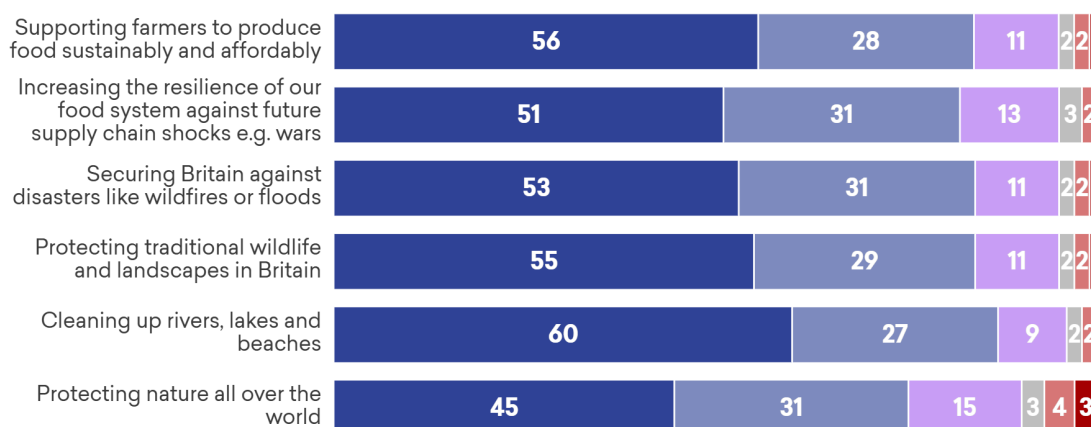
At least four in five Britons said that each of five forms of nature protection in the UK we tested were important to them. Cleaning up of rivers, lakes and beaches was the form of nature protection seen as most important with 87 per cent of Britons saying this is important to them - and 60 per cent say it is very important to them.

Again the importance placed on these issues extends to voters of all parties - demonstrating the unique unifying role nature in Britain's increasingly fragmented politics.

Britons support all forms of nature protection, but think national is more important than global

When thinking about nature loss and recovery, how important, if at all, is each of the following to you?

● Very important ● Somewhat important ● Neither important nor unimportant
● Don't know ● Somewhat unimportant ● Very unimportant



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Britons want nature to be left alone so it can thrive again

While Britons strongly and almost universally support protecting and improving the environment, many feel nature is under threat. Talking to people about where they live, many describe the feeling of losing nature in their local area.

This sense that nature is under threat, particularly from development, and needs stronger protections is held across partisan divides. Nine in ten Britons say that some parts of the UK should be left purely for nature to recover. For this group that means recovery without interference or variations in land use.

It does feel like it's closing in a little bit recently. There's more and more land being allotted for warehouses and housing. So, it does feel like it's getting less and less.

Christine, Retail Assistant, Makerfield

I see a lot of changes, see a lot of new builds everywhere. It just feels like every road I go down, there's a new estate popping up. And yeah, I think it's everywhere that we're encroaching on a lot of green space.

Beth, Social Worker, Dorking and Horley

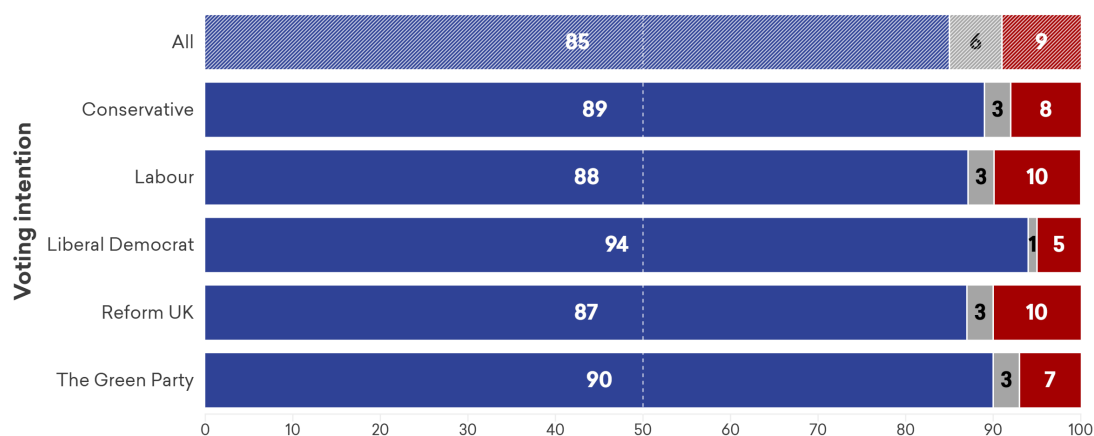
Any patch of green that's available in London specifically, they're just trying to build on top. For example, you've got just down the road, you've got Tottenham Hill, that's like flats everywhere. Nice flats, but flats everywhere [...] I just think before you know it, if we allow it, then there won't be no fields anymore. There won't be any greens.

Dominic, Actor/Presenter, Enfield

Britons are in consensus on setting aside parts of the country for purely nature

Which of the following is closest to your view?

- There should be parts of the UK which are set aside purely for the recovery of nature ● Don't know
- All land across the UK should be able to be used by humans e.g. building homes or infrastructure



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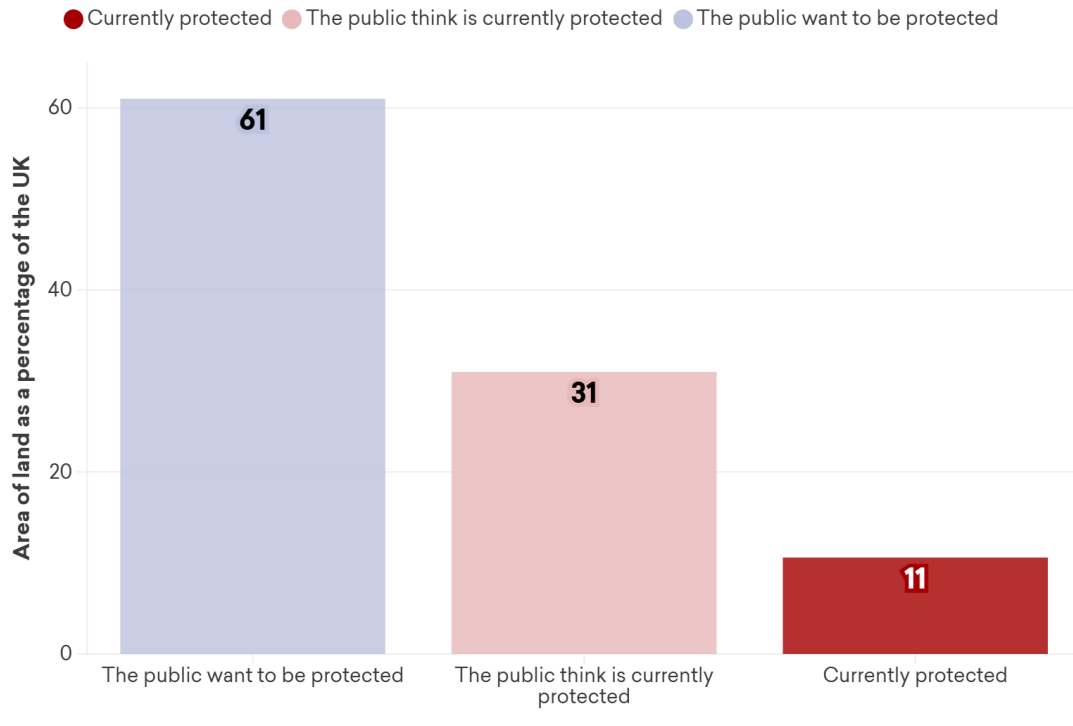
Britons want more of the country be protected

However, many Britons estimate that current levels of environmental protection are much higher than they actually are. On average Britons think that about one-third (31 per cent) of land in Britain is under environmental protection. While the exact extent of protected area is difficult to define, in Scotland estimates are half this number at 17.6 per cent yet in England this number is just 6.5 per cent ([JNCC, 2025](#)).

Britons have even higher expectations for future protection too. Asked to say the proportion of the UK countryside they think should be covered by environmental protections, the average (mean) answer is 60 per cent, double the proportions proposed by the government's 30x30 target. Britons' desire for nature to be left alone and protected drives support for the principle of the designation of protected land - something they feel politicians are failing to deliver.

Britons want more of the countryside to be protected than currently is

Question wording below



Source: More in Common • August 2026

Left = What percentage of the countryside do you think should be under environmental protection? Center = As far as you are aware, what percentage of land in Britain is currently covered by environmental protections? Right = Land currently under protection is 2025 data from the Joint Nature and Conservation Committee.

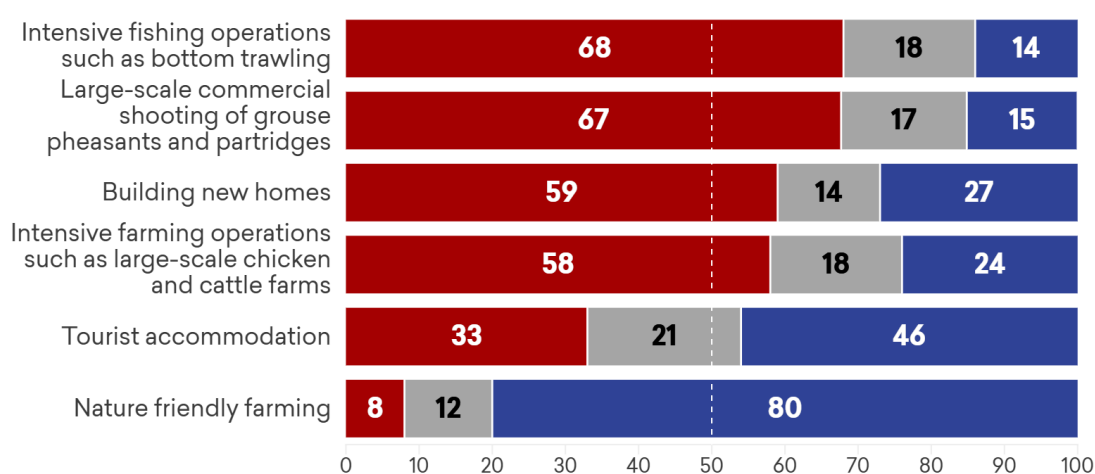
Despite its strong appeal, current levels of public understanding around the status and designation of protected land is low. Just a quarter (25 per cent) of the public say they have either a complete or at least some understanding of the current levels of protection given to land designated as protected - the same proportion say they have no understanding of this at all. Only 18 per cent of Britons can correctly define the use of the Green Belt as a planning policy to stop urban sprawl, with one-quarter believing the main criteria for Green Belt status is having high quality nature and wildlife. One-fifth say they don't know at all.

Over half of Britons (58 per cent) think that large-scale chicken and cattle farming should not be permitted in protected areas, while two-thirds (67 per cent) say that large-scale commercial shooting should not be permitted.

Britons would bar trawling and game shooting from protected areas, but not tourism

For each of the following, indicate whether you think they should or should not be permitted inside areas of National Park, Marine Protected or National Landscape status in the UK?

● Should not be permitted ● Not sure ● Should be permitted



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Few focus group participants felt that current legal protections actually do much to protect green space and nature near them.

I don't see any evidence that that stops building because numerous times they've proposed to build things and there's been complaints, complaints, there have been petitions, and it just gets overridden and they end up building it anyway [...] I've yet to see somewhere that's been saved because of legal reasons. They just build. Money talks.

Christine, Retail Assistant, Makerfield

I've yet to see that happen, where they've stopped building because of regulations. I've never seen it happen.

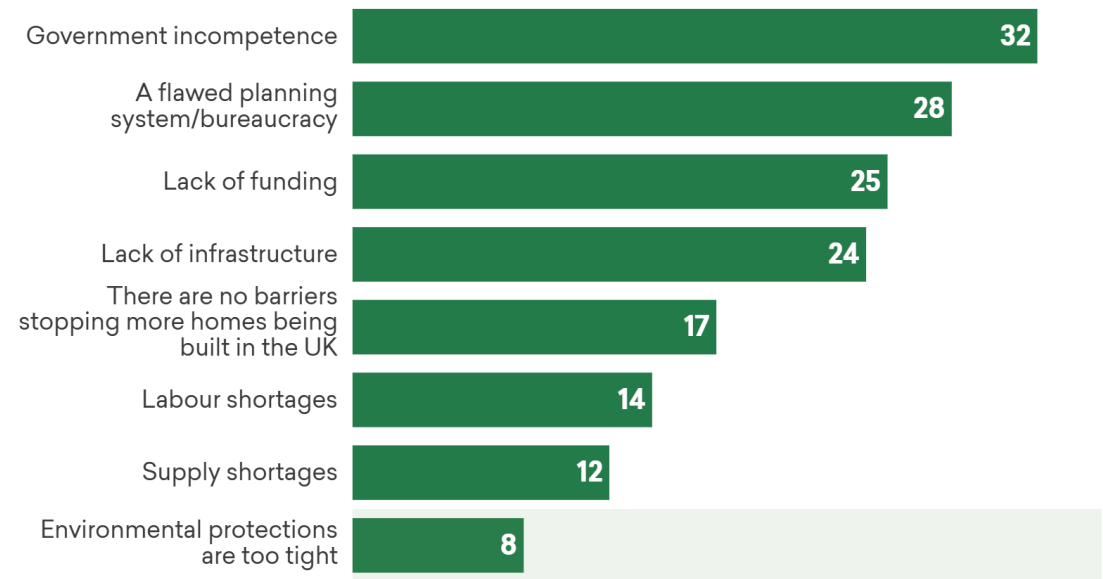
Christine, Retail Assistant, Makerfield

Nature and housing - a false binary in the eyes of the public

Britons tend not to believe that strict environmental regulation is what is blocking progress in house building. Fewer than one in ten (8 per cent) say that overly stringent environmental protections specifically are driving insufficient housebuilding in Britain. Instead, the most common reason given by the public is government incompetence - one third (32 per cent) of Britons named this a top reason houses aren't being built.

Britons blame government incompetence, not environmental rules, for the shortage of new homes

Which of the following, if any, do you think have been the biggest challenges to the government and housing developers building more housing over the last two years? Select up to three



Similarly, in conversation many express a desire to find a balance between house building and nature protection, rejecting the idea that one should be sacrificed for another.

I do think there should be more affordable housing, but I also agree that I don't think it should be at the expense of the wildlife. So, it's very much you can do one, but you can't do it without the other.

Evie, Barista, Dorking and Horley

The public generally want to see the discussion between nature protection and housebuilding conducted with nuance. In contrast, an approach which pits one against the other is likely to be met with public frustration.

Potentially, yeah, because there are a lot of homeless people, there are a lot of people that need the affordable housing. So, it's swings and roundabouts, isn't it? You need to protect wildlife and you need to protect nature, but people need homes to live in. So yeah, it's a tricky one.

Chloe, PA, Dorking and Horley

Instead, Britons want the principle of the protection of the environment to be part of the development and the planning process. They want to facilitate the creation of clean, beautiful and healthy environments to accompany new developments, the sort of places they want to live in themselves.

You can have bat boxes, you can have wildlife, make the gardens slightly smaller and have wildlife gardens at the end, have waterways that can encourage newts and things like that. They shouldn't be softened, but they can be adapted to make things more of a balance for nature.

Julie, Duty Manager, Dorking and Horley

Is there some way of providing an incentive? Yes, you can build on this land, but you have to tend to your garden and make it a wildlife haven or something.

Alice, Occupational Therapist, Dorking and Horley

Britons feel the system is failing nature

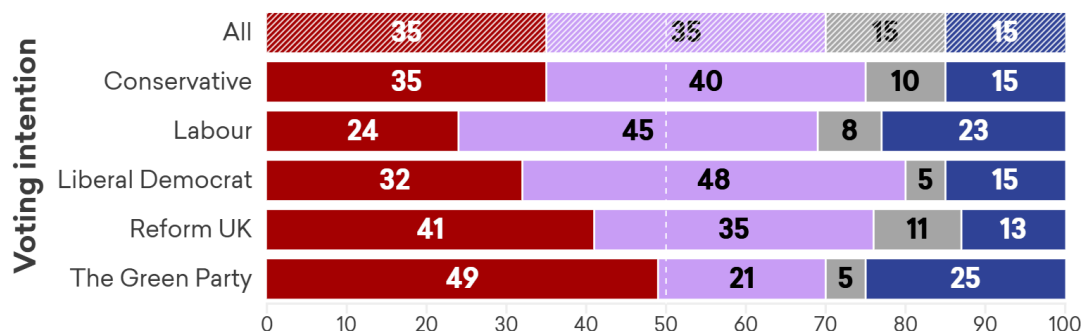
Feelings that nature is not being sufficiently protected are also driving a belief that the broader system is failing, and those with power are being allowed to damage nature without reprisal. Over two thirds of Britons (70 per cent) believe companies that damage nature and wildlife do not pay for the damage that they have caused with equal proportions attributing this to regulators not caring (35 per cent) and regulators trying but lacking the competency to hold them accountable (35 per cent).

Noticeably, this belief that regulators don't care about degradation caused by large companies and those with power is significantly higher among voters for the insurgent Green (49 per cent) and Reform (41 per cent) parties than it is for Labour (24 per cent), Liberal Democrat (32 per cent) and Conservative (35 per cent) voters.

Fewer than one in six Britons think government makes successfully makes companies pay for damaging nature

Thinking about when those with power or running large companies damage nature and wildlife, which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Governments and regulators seem to not care
- Governments and regulators do try but often fail to make those companies pay for the damage they've caused
- Don't know
- Governments and regulators do make those companies pay for the damage they've caused



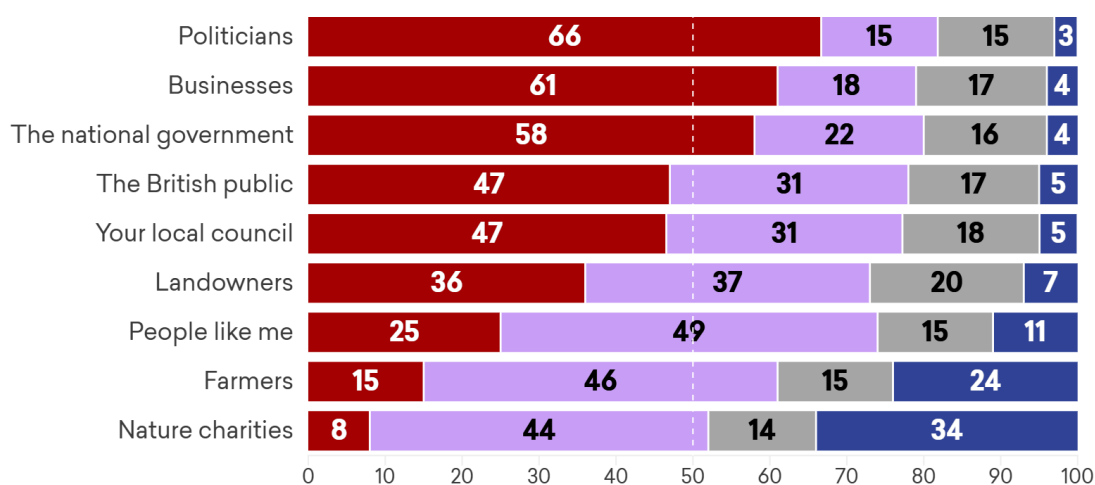
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This feeling goes some way to explain the fact that two-thirds of Britons believe that politicians aren't doing their fair share in protecting nature. In contrast, majorities of Britons think farmers (70 per cent) and nature charities (68 per cent) are doing either the right amount or more than their fair share to protect nature. The risk for politicians is that these latter groups are seen to be acting in the public interest, whereas they are not.

Britons say politicians and business aren't doing their fair share to protect nature

Do you think each of the following are doing their fair share to protect nature in the UK?

● Doing less than their fair share ● Doing about the right amount
● I don't know ● Doing more than their fair share



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In focus groups, participants voiced their lack of trust and frustration at businesses and politicians for not doing their part.

I don't think [politicians] actually know what they care about [...] their priorities certainly aren't people and certainly aren't nature or wildlife.

Beth, Social Worker, Dorking and Horley

It just seems like money talks and if the money's enough, they just don't listen to anybody's concerns and they just do it anyway.

Christine, Retail Assistant, Makerfield

Faith in both businesses and politicians is being eroded by this feeling that the concerns of ordinary Britons are not taken into account or taken seriously when dealing with nature protection. Many Britons increasingly view politics in terms of us vs them dynamics, driving support for parties outside of the traditional mainstream 'us' of ordinary Britons pitted against the 'them' of large developers and politicians who are willing to harm nature in the pursuit of personal gain.

They're being built for people that can afford these big expensive executive homes. And they're all in the market.

Beth, Social Worker, Dorking and Horley

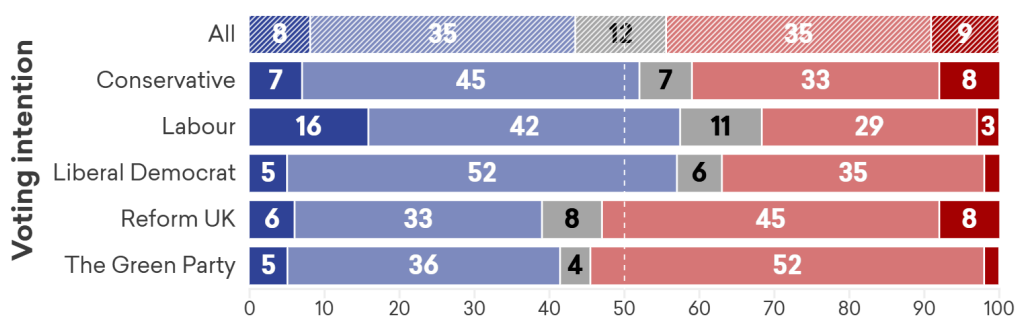
Britons are left feeling their own actions are insufficient

Many Britons feel let down on nature. Just nine per cent of Britons feel like their actions to protect nature are matched by those in power. Three-quarters (77 per cent) say that they do not feel like those in power are taking enough action to protect nature. Crucially, this is making Britons' feel their actions to protect nature are futile. 35 per cent of Britons say they feel their actions are made irrelevant by a lack of action from those in power. This feeling is even more pronounced among Reform (45 per cent) and Green (52 per cent) voters.

Fewer than one in ten Britons think those in power are doing enough on nature

Thinking about how much action you take to try and protect nature and wildlife, versus the action those with power are taking, which of the following comes closest to your view?

- I think those in power are taking enough action which makes my action meaningful
- Even though those in power aren't taking enough action my actions are still meaningful
- Don't know
- I feel like my actions are made irrelevant by a lack of action from those in power
- I don't take any action to protect nature



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SNP, Plaid Cymru and another party/independent voters not shown: unweighted base under 100.

I'm going to go for something that I probably wouldn't have even looked at until all of these building things were happening [...] That was a big impact on my reason for voting who I voted for.

Samantha, Psychotherapist, Enfield

I was just thinking then on the by-election, it was one of the things that was swinging my vote [from Labour to Reform] was the fact that they were saying one of the things that they want to push is to not be building on all the green space [...] I moved away from Manchester because it was getting too condensed in there. I've moved to a village. I want the green space. I want that bit of freedom and I don't want someone to come and take it away because they want to make a few extra quid.

Ben, Sales Admin, Makerfield

Protecting domestic nature is more of a priority than protecting nature internationally

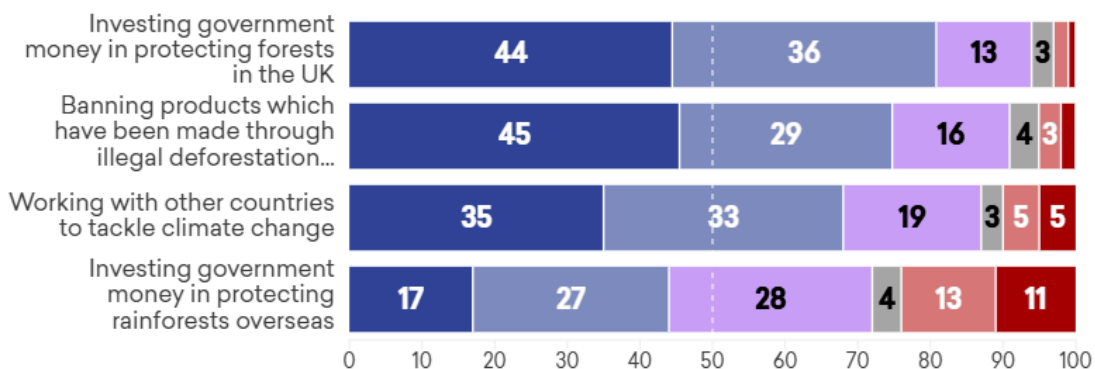
While Britons are supportive of initiatives to protect nature within the UK, support for efforts to provide resources or investment towards the preservation of nature abroad is less strong. For example, 80 per cent of Britons support investing government money in protecting forests in the UK, but just 44 per cent of Britons support the government investing money in protecting rainforests overseas. This drop-off in support is most pronounced among Reform voters. 81 per cent support investment in protecting British forests but only 30 per cent of them support investment in protecting rainforests overseas.

That is not to say that Britons do not care about the state of nature abroad. Three-quarters of Britons (75 per cent) support the UK government banning products which are derived from illegal overseas deforestation. A further two-thirds (68 per cent) support working with other countries to tackle climate change. This includes a majority of both Reform and Conservative voters (51 per cent and 69 per cent respectively).

Britons back action on overseas deforestation, but not paying for it

How much would you support or oppose the UK government doing each of the following?

● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Neither support nor oppose
● Don't know ● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose



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Overall, Britons are far happier with the idea of the government using soft power, or changing supply chains, to help protect nature abroad. They are far less likely to be supportive of the government spending taxpayers money to do so.

I think we should put political pressure on things like deforestation and whaling fleets and overfishing in areas. I don't think it should be money spent in that region [...] But as far as spending money on it, foreign aid and things like that, then maybe not.

Steve, Welding Automation, Makerfield

In terms of international funding, I agree with some, but I think collaboration and cooperation internationally is probably more important than putting money at it in places.

Barry, Care Home Worker, Enfield

Domestic nature recovery is prioritised over international nature recovery among the public for two reasons. First, Britons feel the UK government has much more agency over the protection of nature at home and so are more likely to question the effectiveness of overseas nature protection initiatives. Second, most Britons feel that government finances are finite and so want to prioritise the protection of nature on their doorstep before they move onto nature further afield.

I think as a country, the government should look after or focus on us. Now as an individual, if I was into trying to save the climate and doing stuff, and I was a bit better off because the country's being run better, I have more money in my pocket, maybe I could go over there and help them with that.

Ben, Sales Admin, Makerfield

I'm quite often of the view that we need to stick our noses out of other countries' business, because if we weren't involved in other countries' businesses so much, perhaps we would be more focused on our own stuff.

Beth, Social Worker, Dorking and Horley

I think we've got much more control over wildlife than climate change [...] what's going on in India and China and what have you. I think what we can do has a tiny effect on climate change, unfortunately. Whereas wildlife in our own counties, I think we've got more control and can have more impact on that.

Alan, Retired, Dorking and Horley

Chapter 3 | The politics of nature

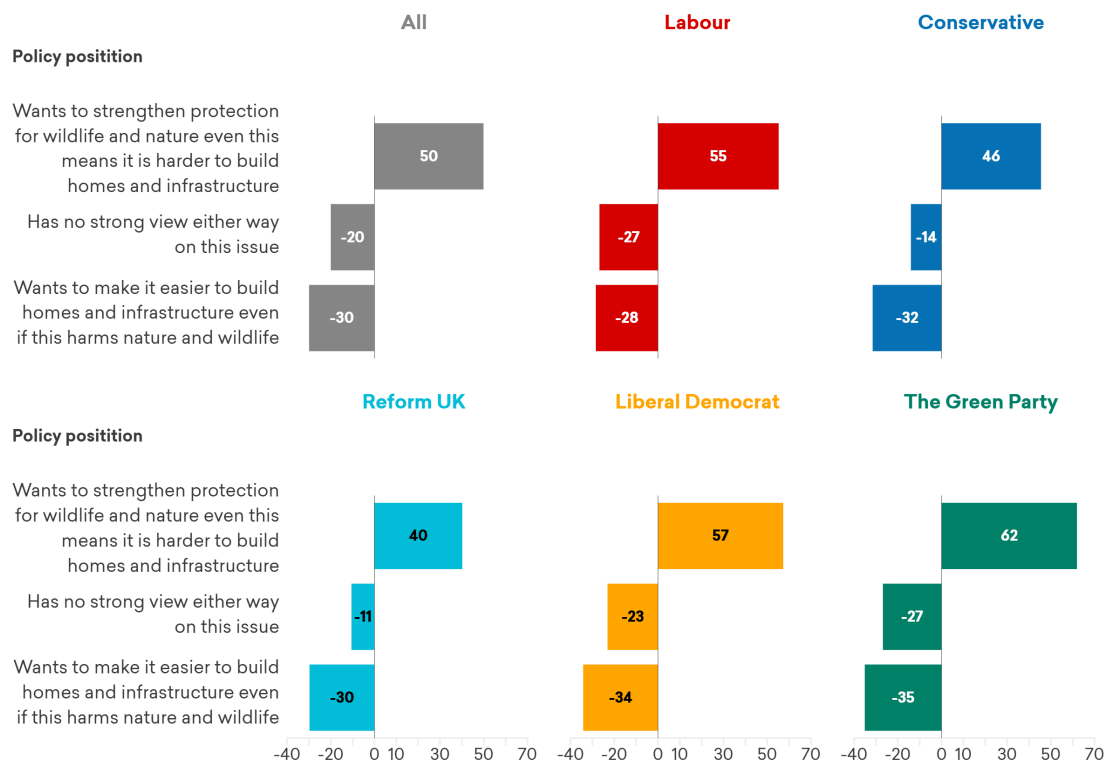
Demonstrating the potential electoral impact of nature - a conjoint experiment

Britons' love of nature is well-evidenced, well-established and further borne out by the conclusions of the previous chapters. But the extent to which policy positions on nature can and do shape voting decisions is less clear. To assess this, a statistical conjoint experiment was conducted as part of this survey.

The results from the conjoint experiment were clear. Britons view politicians who propose strengthening protections for nature and wildlife significantly more positively than those who want to do the converse. That holds even if this makes it harder to build homes and infrastructure. Crucially, this is a non-polarising position. Voters of every major party view politicians who take this pro-nature position more favourably, although the magnitude of this effect is significantly higher among current Liberal Democrat, Green and Labour voters than it is for Reform and Conservative voters.

Voters of every party prefer politicians who prioritise stronger nature protection over easier building

Conjoint utility scores for each position on nature and planning reform. Higher scores mean the position makes a politician be seen more favourably to voters.



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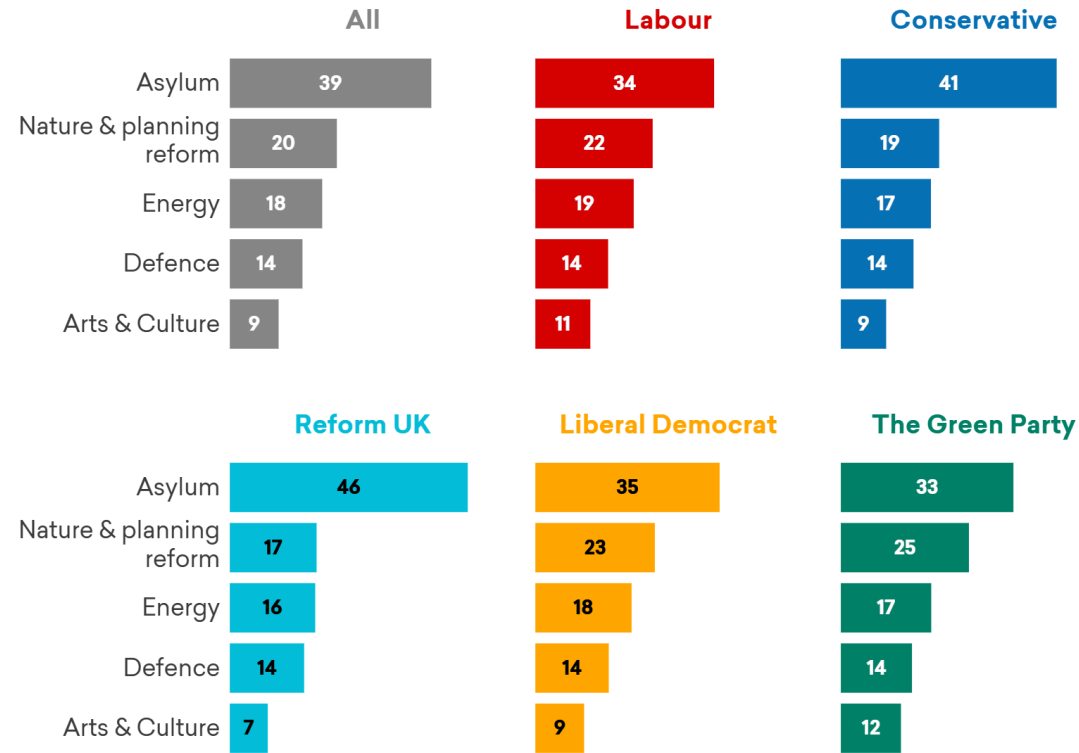
This preference for politicians who seek to strengthen planning protections for nature and wildlife is not as is sometimes assumed the preserve of those comfortably on the house ladder or for whom home building is not a priority. Even among those who think Britain has built too few homes in recent years, politicians with this pro-nature stance are seen more favourably. Britons are also equally as likely to view such a pro-nature politician more favourably regardless of their own housing situation, with no statistically significant between an individual's personal level of housing security and the degree to which a pro-nature politician is seen more favourably. Finally, in line with the findings outlined throughout this report, even among those who are strongly opposed to the UK government's net zero target, a pro-nature politician is seen more favourably, though the strength of feeling is particularly concentrated among those who are supportive of the government's net zero target.

The conjoint experiment also demonstrated that as well as the public having a strong preference for politicians with a pro-nature stance, nature can play an important role in determining the public's overall perceptions of politicians. The relative attribute importance figure in this conjoint experiment is a measure of the extent to which varying a

politician's position on an issue influences which politicians the public view more favourably. In the conjoint experiment, positions on asylum policy were, by quite some way, the most significant driver of which politician Britons said they saw more favourably. However, positions on nature were the second most important driver - with this being true for voters of all the major parties.

Positions on nature protection were the second most important factor in shaping which politician respondents saw more favourably

Relative importance of each attribute in driving preferred politician. [%]



This conjoint experiment clearly demonstrated two things. First, Britons of all partisan persuasions are likely to see politicians who advocate for the protection of nature more favourably than those who say protections need to be relaxed to build the homes and infrastructure the country needs. Second, when presented with two politicians with differing positions on the issue, policies towards nature play a significant role in

determining which politicians Britons like more and as a consequence are more likely to vote for.

Explaining the discrepancy between hypothetical and observed behaviour

However, wider More in Common research suggests that policies on nature are not currently playing a significant role in determining which party Britons vote for at General Elections. Indeed, while participants were clear across our Makerfield, Dorking and Enfield focus group conversations that they cared deeply about nature and wildlife, few said it was one of the top issues that would determine who they voted for at the General Election. This discrepancy can be explained by two factors: locality and awareness.

Nature is a local issue

When Britons walk into General Election booths, they face two decisions. First, deciding who they feel will be the most effective representative of their local area in Parliament. Second, deciding which party or leader they would like to run the country. Different Britons put varying weight on these two questions when they decide who to vote for but they are the two fundamental questions which shape election outcomes.

Britons care and worry about the state of nature in their own local area first and foremost. Consequently, most see nature as a local rather than national issue, and as a result the politics of nature plays out almost entirely through the first of these two questions. When considering who they want their local MP to be, Britons talk of individuals who will champion their area and fight for improvements to it. Given nature is one of Britons' biggest sources of local pride and so when it is under threat in their local area, it can serve as an effective litmus test for whether parties and candidates meet this standard.

This was demonstrated across three focus group conversations. In Makerfield, Labour-Reform swing voters spoke of how one of their core considerations in determining who would make the best local MP for their area at the recent by-election was the candidates' positions on greenbelt development - with participants citing the strong commitments made by both the Reform candidate and Andy Burnham. In Dorking and Horley, several participants spoke of the positive impression that Chris Coghlan had made on them as their local MP - leaning heavily on his work to protect green spaces and put pressure on local water companies to reduce their pollution. In Enfield North, several participants spoke of how they felt they couldn't vote for Labour at the recent council elections because of the plans for development on the greenbelt that the Labour-run Enfield Council had overseen.

I've seen [Chris Coghlan] make posts on Facebook about sewage dumping and [river] cleaning and things like that. So that's probably the most 'nature' aspect that I've probably seen him talking about.

Beth, Social Worker, Dorking and Horley

I don't think they are anti-nature. I just don't think it's a priority for Labour. I think it's all about economic growth as being their main target.

Pam, Events Manager, Enfield

Nature is already shaping politics at the local level and in Britain's increasingly fragmented and localised party system, such factors could play an even larger role at the next election than they did in 2024. To insulate themselves from these dynamics, MPs will want to be able to demonstrate they have helped secure tangible improvements to their local communities. Given Britons' attachment to local nature, there is an electoral premium to demonstrating they are taking action to protect nature in their constituencies.

Nature is a sleeping giant of an electoral issue

Most Britons do not currently see nature as an issue which determines their vote at the national level because few know what the different parties' policies on nature are. Two things are required for an issue to become electorally salient. First, the public must care about it. Second, politicians and parties must talk about and campaign on the topic and possess distinctive policy stances for voters to choose between.

For nature, the first condition is met but the second is not. Britons have little awareness of the parties' policy positions at the national level. In focus groups, Britons struggle to cite a single intervention the Labour Government has made on the issue of nature. Only with the Green Party do people make positive associations with nature and even here that is because of the party's name and tradition of environmental activism rather than any distinct policy position. Indeed, few could point to any real differences in policy positions or emphasis between the different parties at the national level.

However, when presented with the trade-off in the conjoint experiment of having a candidate who wanted to reduce nature protections in order to make it easier to build, Britons responded very negatively. Many participants who at the start of their focus group had said nature wasn't a major factor in shaping who they vote for suggested that they wouldn't want to vote for a candidate who wanted to reduce nature protections. This suggests that while nature might not currently be a very important electoral issue for Britons, if awareness of diverging party positions on the issue to grow, this could change. Occasionally flare ups in local elections and constituencies where specific developments make Britons feel their local nature and wildlife is under threat already show nature's potency as an electoral issue.

The implications for parties' political strategies

The potential for policies and perceptions of nature to decide votes at elections raises different strategic considerations for Britain's major parties. This final section of the report is an overview of the risks and opportunities nature presents for each of Britain's five major parties.

Labour's “build, baby, build” rhetoric risks threatening its reputation on nature

Labour voters are often stereotyped as metropolitan elites, but the evidence suggests nature is deeply important to them. Labour supporters care deeply about nature: 52 per cent of Labour voters say they take action at least once a week to protect nature. 89 per cent of Labour's 2024 voters say that nature is important to them, including 52 per cent who say it is “very important”. Any stereotype about Labour voters being unconcerned with nature because of the urban/rural split is incorrect.

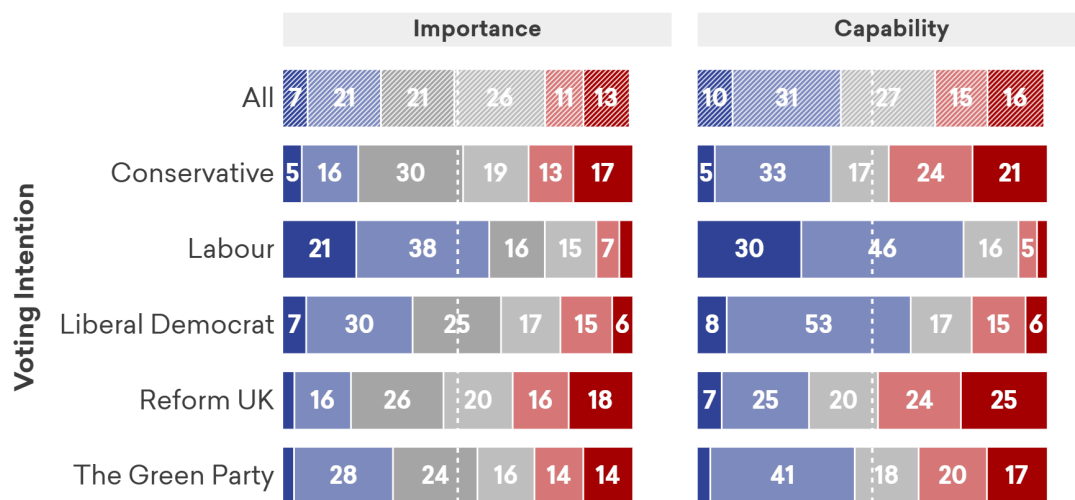
Andy Burnham is seen as someone who could protect nature, but voters are less sure it is a priority for him. 42 per cent of the public think Andy Burnham is capable of taking action to protect nature, compared to 31 per cent who think he is not - the highest score of any party leader. Notably, this includes a plurality of Green voters (45 per cent), and significant numbers of Conservative and Reform voters (38 and 32 per cent). But asked whether people think Burnham finds nature personally important, just 29 per cent think Burnham feels this way.

The public are cautiously optimistic about Burnham's capability to protect nature, but are unsure if he finds it personally important

Do you think protecting nature and wildlife is important to [Andy Burnham]?

To what extent do you think [Andy Burnham] is capable of delivering the action needed to protect wildlife and nature in the UK?

- Very important/Completely capable
- Somewhat important/somewhat capable
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Don't know
- Somewhat unimportant/Quite incapable
- Very unimportant/completely incapable



There is also a real risk that Andy Burnham and Labour's perceived weaknesses on nature protection worsen thanks to the potential unpopularity of the previous Starmer government's reforms and rhetoric on planning and nature protection. In September 2025, Labour launched a series of initiatives broadly designed to signal intent to increase housebuilding, notably dubbed by Ministers as part of their mission to "Build, Baby, Build".

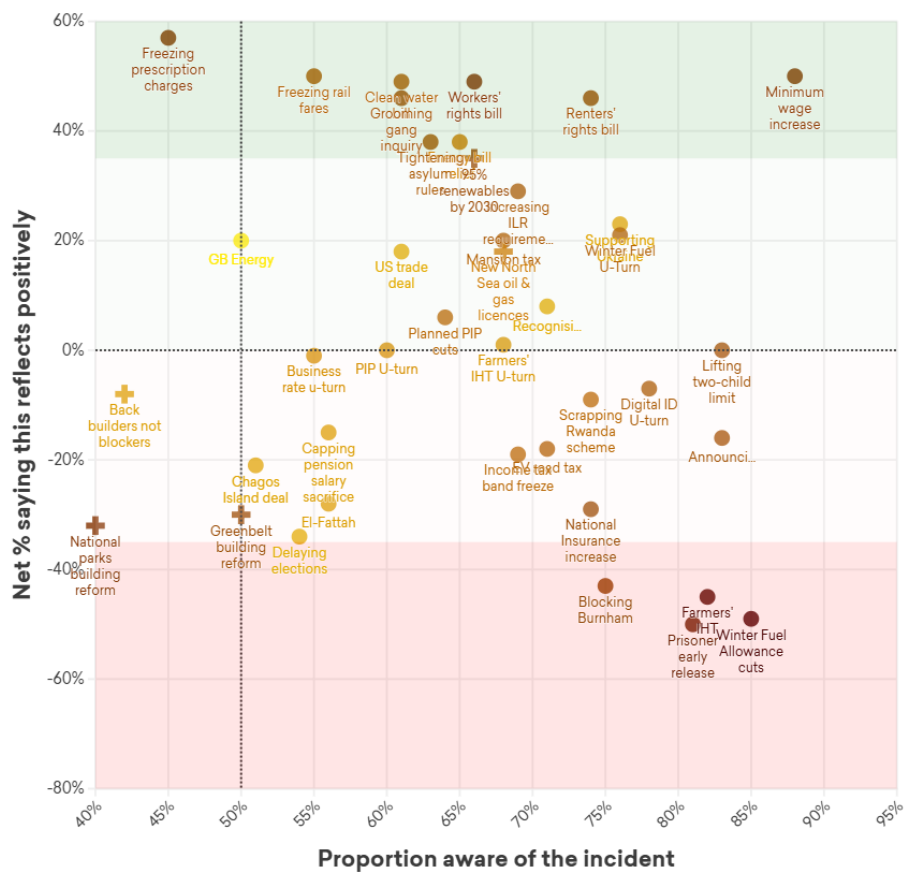
These reforms, and the rhetoric the government used to promote them, are deeply unpopular, including among 2024 Labour voters. Just 14 percent of Britons believe that weakening protections for animals and wildlife in the planning system so it is easier for developers to build infrastructure in Britain reflects well on the government, compared to 58 per cent who believe it reflects badly on them. 55 per cent of those who voted Labour in 2024 say the reforms reflects negatively on the government while just 23 per cent say it reflects positively on them. Other major flagship policies including making it easier to build roads, homes and major developments in national parks (51 per cent), and mandating that councils allow homes to be built on some parts of the greenbelt (49 per cent), are also seen to reflect negatively on the government.

These policies are only not doing deeper damage to Labour's poll ratings because, for now, awareness of them remains low. The raft of pro-development policies actually rank as some of the most unpopular decisions of the previous Labour government, but awareness of them, in most cases, is under half of Britons. Only around four in ten Britons say they have heard of Labour's plans to change regulations for building around national parks and only 36 per cent say they have heard of the government's proposals to reduce protections for animals and wildlife in the planning system to facilitate easier development.

Labour's planning reforms were some of the most unpopular decisions of the Starmer government- but far fewer were aware than other unpopular decisions

Lighter colours indicate greater ambivalence (more people expressing neither a negative nor positive view of the event)

Nature policies indicated with a +



Source: More in Common (Jan- Feb 2026, Aug 2026) • Net % saying this reflects positively = % saying incident either reflects very or somewhat positively - % saying it either reflects very or somewhat negatively

The focus on overriding nature with building sits uneasily with a 'politics of place' and pride in local communities, of which nature plays a vital role in building. Labour voters are not

supportive of weakening nature protections to expedite house building, and those who have left the party are even less supportive.

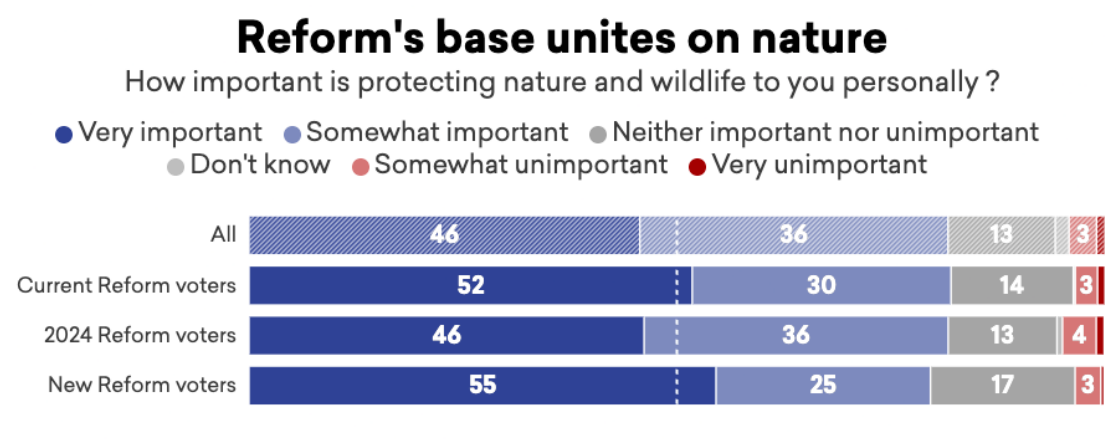
Andy Burnham himself scores better on nature protection than his party. While Burnham is seen as the politician most capable of protecting nature and second to only Zack Polanski in terms of the proportion of Britons who think different politicians care about the issue, Labour comes in third place, behind the Liberal Democrats and Greens, on their perceived level of care for nature.

If Burnham continues the binary approach of the previous Labour government on planning and nature reforms, and awareness of Labour’s unpopular policies increases, for example due to opposition parties like the Greens centering them more in their political messaging, there is a real risk of an electoral backlash from voters across the breadth of Labour’s coalition. For example, Britons will not want new powers provided to Mayors to override local authorities’ planning objections to come at the expense of the protection of nature.

Reform – is nature their Achilles heel?

Reform voters care deeply about nature

Contrary to some narratives about Reform voters, Reform’s base is united in their love of nature and wildlife. While a plurality of Reform voters (48 per cent) are opposed to the government’s 2050 net zero target, as is the case with Britons more generally, this climate scepticism doesn’t translate into opposition or even ambivalence about protecting nature. Across Reform’s current voters, their 2024 voters and their converts, four in five say protecting nature and wildlife is personally important to them. Nature and wildlife is the thing which makes them proudest about where they live.



However, Reform voters are very cynical about the ability of politicians to protect nature, and most pessimistic about its decline. Only eight per cent of Reform voters believe the

state of nature in the UK is improving, significantly below the voters of all other parties and a majority of Reform voters think it is declining (56 per cent). Reform voters are significantly more likely to feel as though their actions to protect nature and wildlife are made irrelevant by a lack of action from those in power – 45 per cent say this compared to 35 per cent nationally but short of the Greens on 52 per cent.

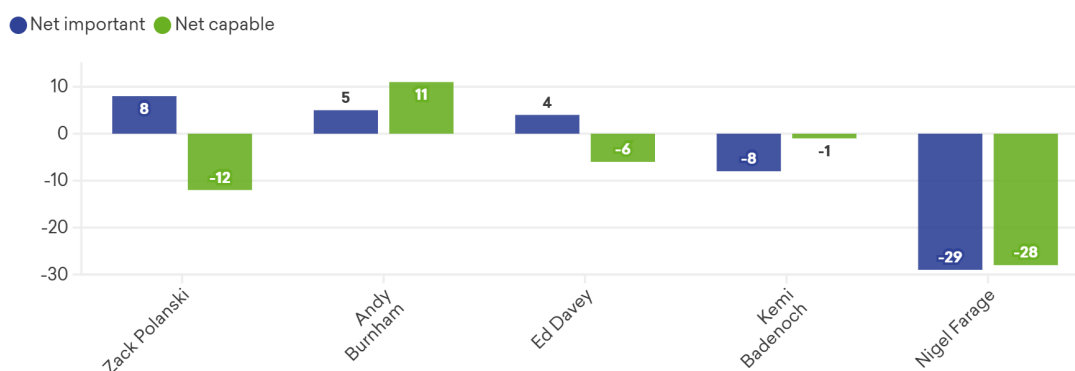
Nature is a potential weak point for Farage and Reform

The public have particularly poor perceptions of Reform and Nigel Farage on the issue. Farage is the party leader least seen to care about protecting nature – just 15 per cent of Britons believe this is important to him, with 45 per cent saying it is unimportant. His net importance score of -29 per cent is significantly worse than all other politicians – including Kemi Badenoch who scores -8 per cent on this metric. This lack of perceived care on nature extends to Reform itself, as just 32 per cent of Britons think the party cares either greatly or a bit about protecting nature and wildlife. Britons also hold concerns about Farage's competency on nature protection. Only 24 per cent say they feel he is capable of delivering the action needed to protect nature and wildlife with half (52 per cent) feeling he is incapable. Again his performance on this measure is by far the worst of all party leaders.

Burnham is the only leader with a positive score on both nature importance and capability

Do you think protecting nature and wildlife is important to each of the following political leaders?

To what extent do you think each of the following political leaders is capable of delivering the action needed to protect wildlife and nature in the UK?



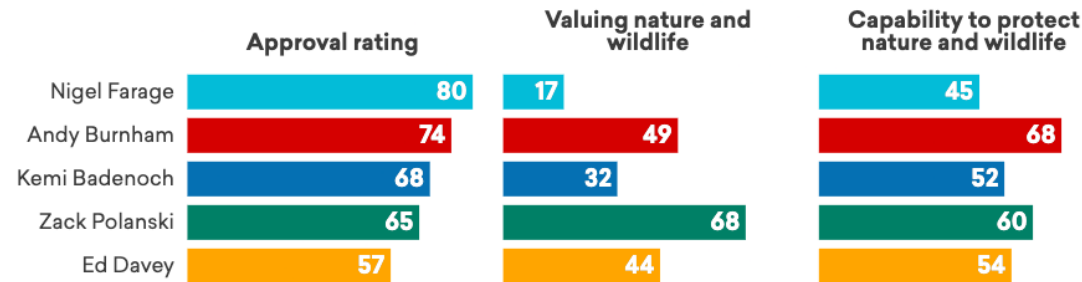
Crucially, these concerns about Farage and Reform's approach to nature are held not just by their already hardened opponents but extend to their voter base as well. Only a third (35 per cent) of Reform voters think protecting nature and wildlife is important to Nigel Farage with 1 in 5 (18 per cent) thinking it is unimportant to him. Even 2024 Reform voters, who tend to be unwavering in their approval of Nigel Farage, are unsure of his commitment to nature: less than half (40 per cent) think it is important to him.

Nigel Farage is also the leader least likely to be seen by his own voters as capable of delivering the action needed to protect nature and wildlife. 65 per cent of current Reform voters think he is compared to 69 per cent of Conservative voters for Kemi Badenoch, 69 per cent of Liberal Democrats for Ed Davey, 76 per cent of Labour voters for Burnham and 79 per cent of Green voters for Polanski.

This is the inverse of general approval ratings where Farage by far has the greatest approval from his own party voters: 84 per cent of Reform voters think he is doing a good job compared to 76 per cent of Labour voters for Burnham and 73 per cent of Conservatives for Badenoch.

Farage has the greatest approval among his own voters - but they are the least likely to trust him on nature

Net score among each leader's own party's voters (positive responses minus negative)



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The risk for Reform therefore, is to misjudge their voters' scepticism around net zero as a disdain towards anything green and environmental, when Reform voters are passionate about protecting nature and wildlife in Britain. Indeed, the libertarian attitudes of the party's leadership towards economic regulation may also pose a risk if their voters see this as extending to siding with developers and the weakening of the environmental protections they strongly support.

Indeed, poor perceptions of Reform's commitment to protecting nature and green spaces may have harmed the party's prospects at the Makerfield by-election. Focus group participants who were considering voting for Labour and Reform described how Burnham's positions on protecting nature cut through more clearly than Reform's:

[Burnham] was strictly saying he doesn't want building on the greenbelt land and whatever. So, he got my vote that time.

Ben, Sales Admin, Makerfield

I've never heard [Farage] push any narrative on that, he's without any angle on that kind of stuff.

Jack, Auto electrics, Makerfield

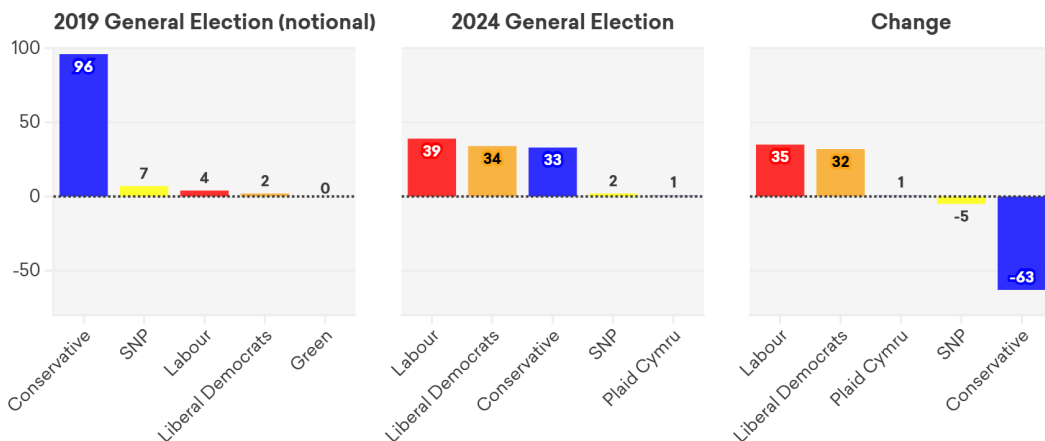
Reform and Farage have a potentially significant weakness on nature. They are seen as not caring about its protection, something that is deeply important to their own voters. This points to two important considerations for them. First, it would be a significant mistake for them to assume that their voters' concerns around climate action extend to nature protection - they firmly do not. Second, given their stringent criticism of net zero, Reform face a unique challenge in that in the absence of any distinctive Reform policies around the protection of nature, voters could assume that the party's lower levels of concern about climate change mean the party cares less about nature. Reform and Nigel Farage should be cautious of allowing a policy vacuum to form on nature, if only to show that their opposition to net zero doesn't extend to opposition towards the environment and nature more broadly.

Conservative Party - Don't forget your roots

The Conservatives have long been associated with nature and the countryside. However, alongside many other losses in their historic 2024 defeat, the Conservatives performed particularly poorly in areas with high coverage of National Landscapes. The Conservatives are traditionally dominant in these areas - they won 96 out of the 109 seats with high coverage of these areas with outstanding natural beauty in 2019. However, in 2024 the Conservatives lost 63 of these seats and saw their vote share drop by 23 points, leaving them in third place. Any Conservative recovery at the next General Election will have to run through the parts of Britain where access to nature is particularly strong and important to local voters.

The Conservatives lost nearly two thirds of their seats in constituencies at least 10 per cent covered by National Landscapes

Constituency results in seats at least 10 per cent covered by National Landscapes (former areas of outstanding natural beauty) in England and Wales, and National Scenic Areas in Scotland



UK House of Commons Library, HM Government, Welsh Government and Scottish Government

Despite this historic identification with the countryside, public perceptions of the Conservatives' commitment to nature and wildlife are currently weak. Just five per cent of Britons, protecting nature and the countryside as one of the Conservatives' top strengths, including just 6 per cent of those currently intending to vote Conservative. Kemi Badenoch's ratings are poor on nature, in contrast to her much stronger ratings across other issues, as just 21 per cent of the public think nature is personally important to her.

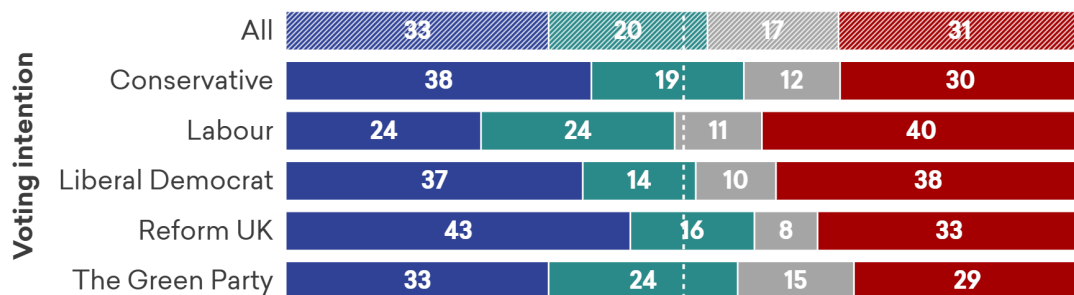
Many Conservative voters differentiate between net-zero and nature protection, the former divides the group, the latter unites it. Nature is central to Conservative voters' sense of pride of where they live, with 39 per cent naming nature and wildlife as one of the top factors that makes them proud of where they live, more than any other factor. Being seen to openly threaten it or being ambivalent towards it could significantly damage support among their base.

A specific challenge for the Conservatives is ensuring their focus on economic growth as part of their party 'renewal' efforts doesn't lead to them being perceived as prioritising economic growth and development at the expense of nature. Conservative voters tend to be the most sceptical of new housing of any party's voters bar Reform. 38 per cent of Conservative voters think too many homes have been built in Britain since the last General Election, compared to 30 per cent who think too few have been built. Conservative voters want economic growth and a strong economy - but any attempt to trade off nature with economic growth is unpopular across all party groups, including the Conservatives.

More Conservatives think too many homes have been built than too few

Thinking about the number of homes the government and housing developers have built in the UK over the past two years, which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Too many have been built ● About the right amount have been built ● Don't know
 ● Too few have been built



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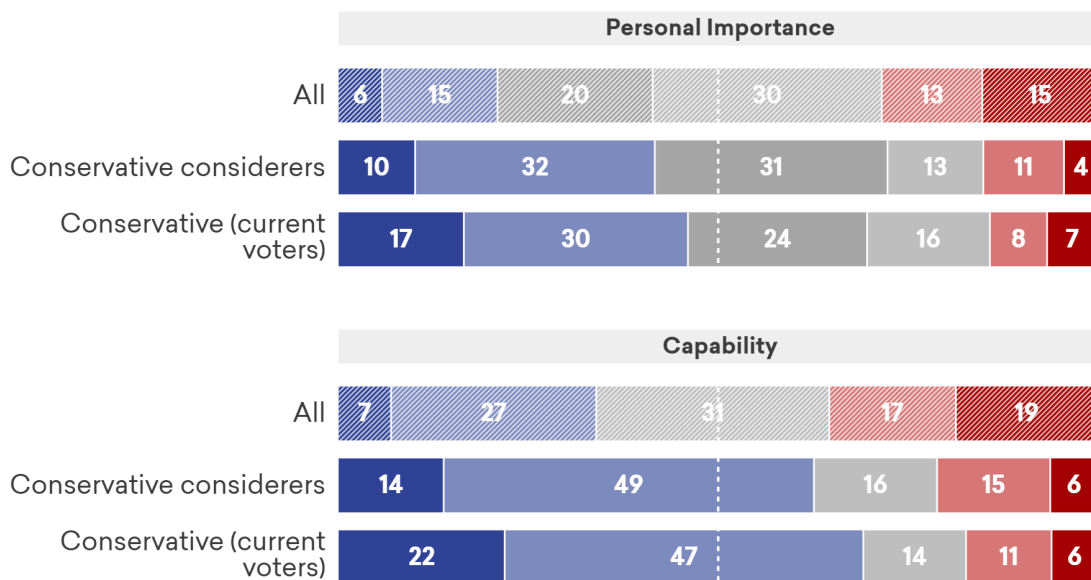
More positively for the party, there is room for the Conservatives to harness nature protection as part of their renewal strategy - particularly in terms of their ability to deliver. While Kemi Badenoch's ratings on the perceived *importance* of nature to her are low, voters rate her second, behind Burnham, as the leader most capable of delivering the action needed to protect it.

The public are split on whether Badenoch is capable of protecting nature, but are unsure if she finds it personally important

Do you think protecting nature and wildlife is important to Kemi Badenoch?

To what extent do you think each of the following political leaders is capable of delivering the action needed to protect wildlife and nature in the UK?

- Very important ● Somewhat important ● Neither important nor unimportant
 ● Don't know ● Somewhat unimportant ● Very unimportant ● Completely capable
 ● Quite capable ● Don't know ● Quite incapable ● Completely incapable



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The Conservatives' reputation on nature has gone backwards in recent years. The Conservative losses in areas with high levels of nature protection and conservation are in part indicative of this. It is very striking that only one in 20 voters associate protecting nature and the countryside as a positive of the Conservative party now. This emerged clearly in the Dorking and Horley focus group conversation, where participants spoke of a feeling that the Conservatives no longer cared about protecting nature and wildlife and outlined that this had contributed to pushing them away from the party.

Horley was a blue area, but they were the ones that signed off on all the massive development. And that's capitalism, isn't it? They are all about profiteering and enterprise and business, which is pretty much at the other end of the scale from protecting green spaces.

Nick, Police Officer, Dorking and Horley

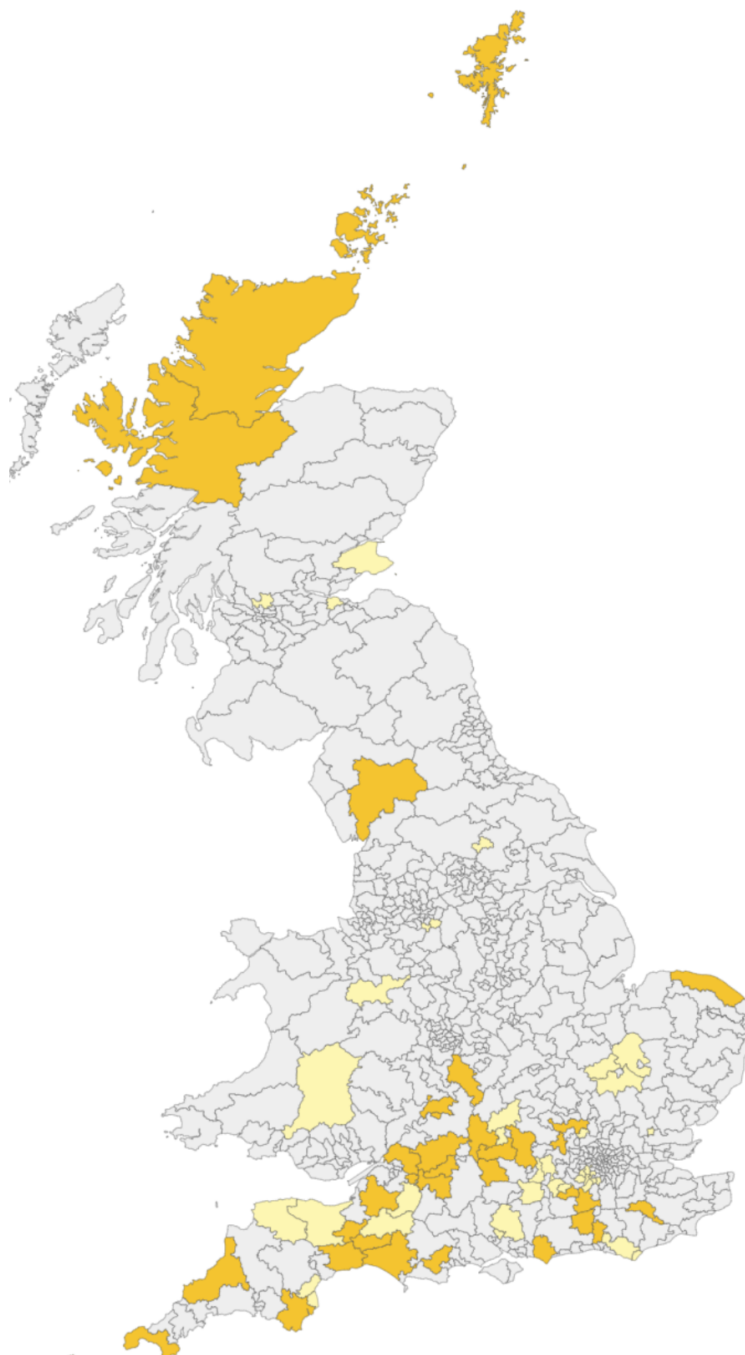
At the last General Election the Conservatives lost swathes of seats to the Liberal Democrats who ran highly localised campaigns. The relative affluence and strength of communities in these Blue Wall seats mean that voters here are likely to place much more importance on which candidate they see as the best potential local MP for their area. While it can't be guaranteed that at the next General Election these local considerations will drive voters' choices, the strong local election results the Liberal Democrats have been able to enjoy in the Blue Wall, despite the Liberal Democrats' failure to cut through at the national level, suggest for now these local considerations continue to be key. If the Conservatives are to win these seats back, then demonstrating their candidates represent the best local MPs will be important. Given their voters' love for nature, establishing that they care and are capable of protecting it can play an important role in enabling this.

Liberal Democrats - a chance to build a national brand

Nearly half (34 out of 72) of Liberal Democrat MP represent constituencies where over 10 per cent of the area is in a National Scenic Area, formerly called Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This was just 2 in 2019. The Liberal Democrats also won 23 per cent of the vote in areas with over 10 per cent coverage by National Scenic Areas, nearly double their vote share in the rest of the country, and up four points from 2019. The Liberal Democrats particularly surged in areas where nature and wildlife is abundant.

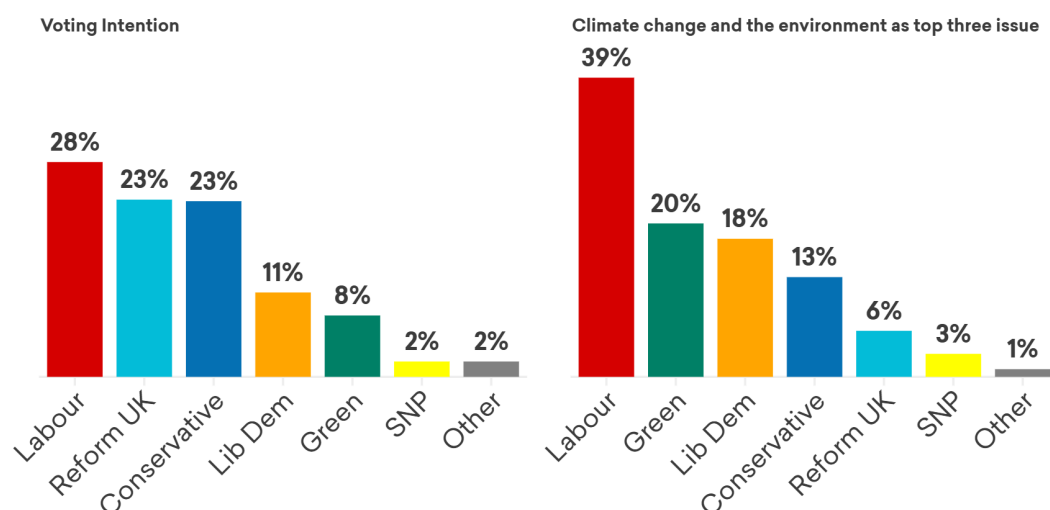
34 out of 72 Liberal Democrat seats are in seats with at least 10 per cent coverage by a National Landscape or National Scenic Area

Coverage: ● High coverage (10%+) ● Other LD seats



Liberal Democrat voters are particularly likely to care about protecting nature and the environment. Their voters are the most likely to say it is their favourite thing about their local area (59 per cent) and their greatest source of local pride (54 per cent). A third (31 per cent) of current Liberal Democrat voters also say climate change and the environment is one of the most important issues facing the country today, more than double the share of Britons overall (15 per cent) who say this, making it the third most important issue facing the country in their eyes. Indeed, their share of the vote among those who select climate change and the environment as a top issue is 7 per cent higher than it is among those who don't.

The Liberal Democrats do significantly better among those with climate change and the environment as a top three issue



The party's focus on sewage, local nature and regulations and protections of development has begun to affect the party's identity and pay some electoral dividends. When it comes to perceived care for nature, the Liberal Democrats rank second with 51 per cent of Britons believing the party either cares greatly or a bit about protecting wildlife and nature. While still significantly behind the Greens, this is still notably strong for the Liberal Democrats as currently the party has a weakly established national brand on most policy issues.

The identification of the care their voters have for nature and wildlife has led many Liberal Democrat MPs to dedicate significant time to campaigning on nature and wildlife conservation. The strength of these local brands on nature was obvious in Dorking and Horley, a constituency around 35 per cent covered by a National Landscape, where the activism of the local MP, Chris Coghlan, had cut through positively. This is helping these Liberal Democrat MPs to establish themselves as the most effective local champions for their constituencies.

So, I actually was very much a conservative voter, but for the local elections, Chris was actually out and about. He does a lot of Facebook posts, a lot of social media posts in relation to all the different places that he goes to. He had been out to a lot of the green space. I know it's slightly off-topic, but also a lot of accident hotspots he goes to look at. And he really does have quite a strong presence in going out and about into the community and actually seeing what's important to people. And yeah, I have seen him at local developments and things like that.

Julie, Duty Manager, Dorking and Horley

However, while locally, Liberal Democrats have, in many areas, established powerful associations with protecting local areas and advocating for nature, the strength of this association is much weaker at the national level. In Dorking and Horley, some participants admitted embarrassment that they couldn't recall any Liberal Democrat policies on nature at the national level, even if they had voted for them.

It's difficult to talk about them as a national party because it sounds awful, but obviously I voted Lib Dem in the last elections, and I'm glad that they got into power where we were. But obviously on a national front, they're not up there with other parties, so you don't actually tend to hear that much about them nationally. Most of my information's from local information.

Beth, Social Worker, Dorking and Horley

Indeed, while Kemi Badenoch and Andy Burnham perform better on measures of capability and action on nature than they do for metrics around prioritisation, the opposite is true for Ed Davey, suggesting that Britons remain particularly unlikely to know what the Liberal Democrats' policies on nature protection are at the national level, as More in Common research from 2025 found. Furthermore, while 61 per cent of voters of all parties in seats where the Liberal Democrats came first or second at the last General Election say they think the party either cares greatly or a bit about protecting nature and wildlife, only marginally behind the Greens' score of 68 per cent in these seats, the proportion of Britons in the rest of the country who believe this is only 49 per cent.

This strongly suggests that outside of those in constituencies where the Liberal Democrats run intensive campaigns, few Britons are hearing about the party's policies on nature protection. Given the deep care for nature Liberal Democrat voters and considerers hold, this represents a missed opportunity for the party to build a stronger national brand and purpose. This could be particularly important in the event that a tightening of the polls means that Britons put greater weight on who they want running the country and less weight on who they want to be their local MP when voting at the next General Election.

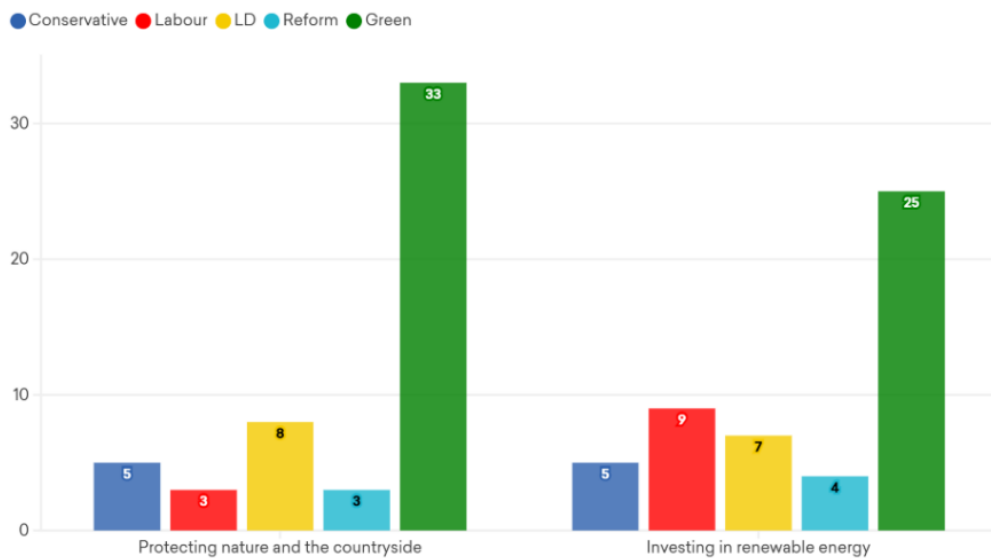
The challenge for the Liberal Democrats is therefore nationalising their appeal on nature beyond the work of their 'local champions', and setting out what they would to protect nature more broadly.

Green Party – despite the shift, nature and the environment is still key

Despite Zack Polanski's pivot of the Green Party away from a concentrated focus on environmental issues to a broader focus on economic populism, the Greens are still consistently seen as caring about protecting nature and the countryside. Indeed, 33 per cent of Britons say the Greens 'at their best' protect nature and the country, and Polanski leads all other leaders when asked who voters perceive to personally care the most about nature. Importantly, the Greens continue to command cross-party recognition of their strength on issues of nature, with recognition for this position being stronger than on other issues, like tackling inequality, towards which Zack Polanski has shifted their focus.

The public still associate the Greens most with nature and investing in renewables

Thinking about [each Party], when they are at their best, what do they stand for? (select up to three)



Greens are still broadly respected on nature and the environment, but their reputation as an anti inequality party is more concentrated to their supporters

Thinking about the Green Party, when they are at their best, what do they stand for? (select up to three)

Top ten answers only

● All ● Conservative ● Labour ● Liberal Democrat ● Reform UK ● Green ● Green considerers



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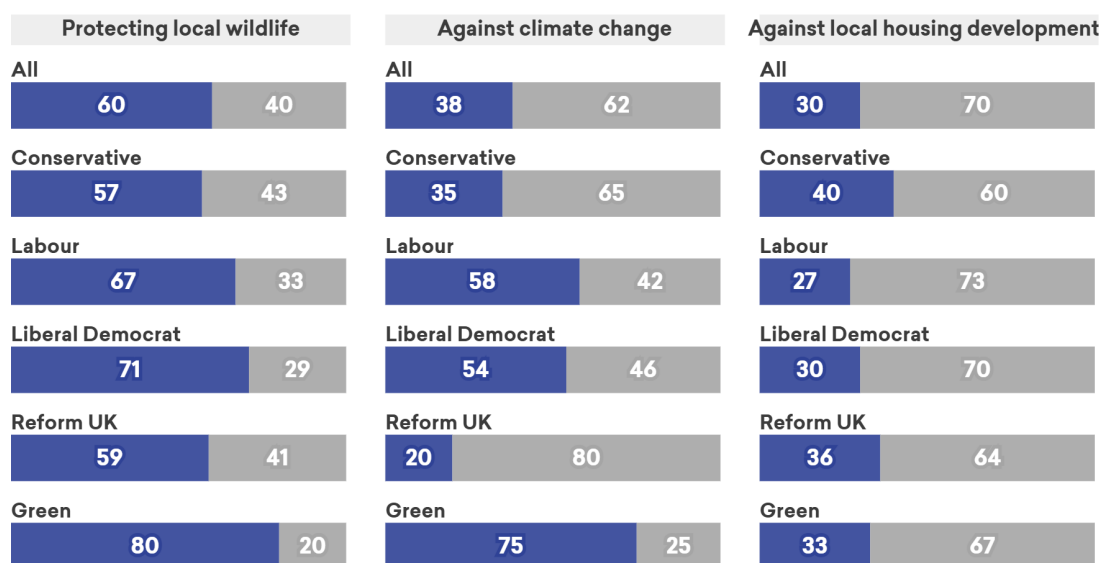
Green voters also remain highly motivated by nature and the environment. Green voters are overwhelmingly likely to say that they would join a campaign to protect nature in their local area (80 per cent) as well as against climate change (75 per cent). They also have the smallest gap in willingness to campaign for local wildlife and climate change overall. For Green voters, there is clearly a strong motivation to both campaign for protecting local

wildlife and against climate change, as they see a clearer link between the decline of one and the other.

Green voters are the most motivated group to campaign for wildlife and against climate change, but not against housing

Which, if any, of the following causes would you join a campaign for?

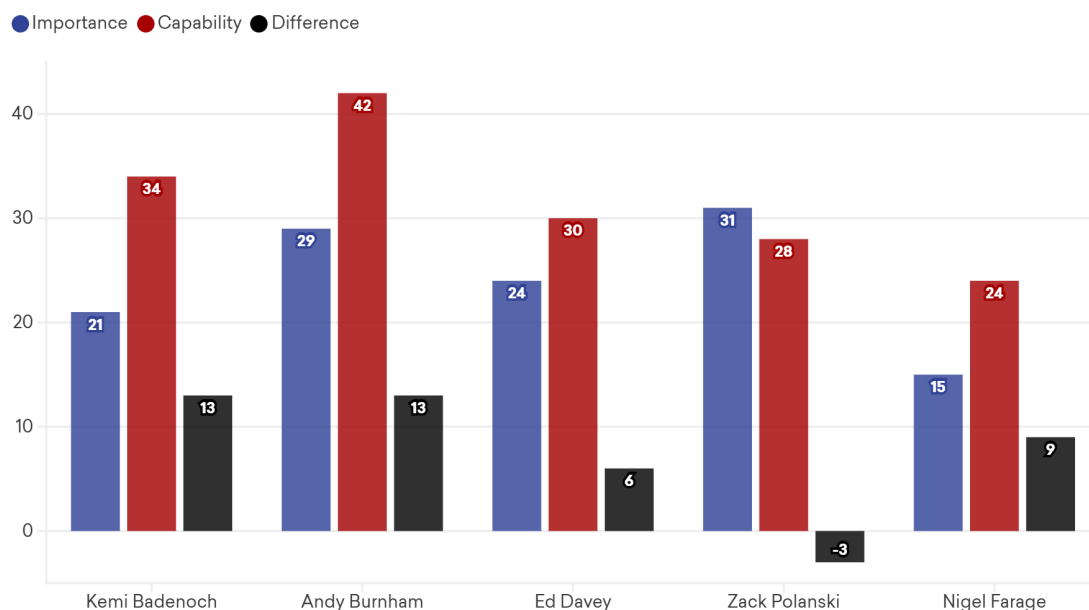
● Would campaign for ● Would not campaign for



The largest problem for the Greens is the gap between perceptions of the Greens caring about nature and perceptions of them being capable of protecting it. When asked how important protecting nature is to the party leaders, around 31 per cent say they think Polanski believes it is important, the highest figure for all leaders. However, when asked which leader is the most capable at delivering action to protect nature, Polanski ranks behind Davey, Badenoch and Burnham and ahead of only Farage.

The public think Zack Polanski cares the most about nature, but have less faith in his ability to deliver on it

Percentage who think nature is important to these politicians, compared with the percentage who think they are capable of protecting nature



Source: More in Common • August 7-10 2026

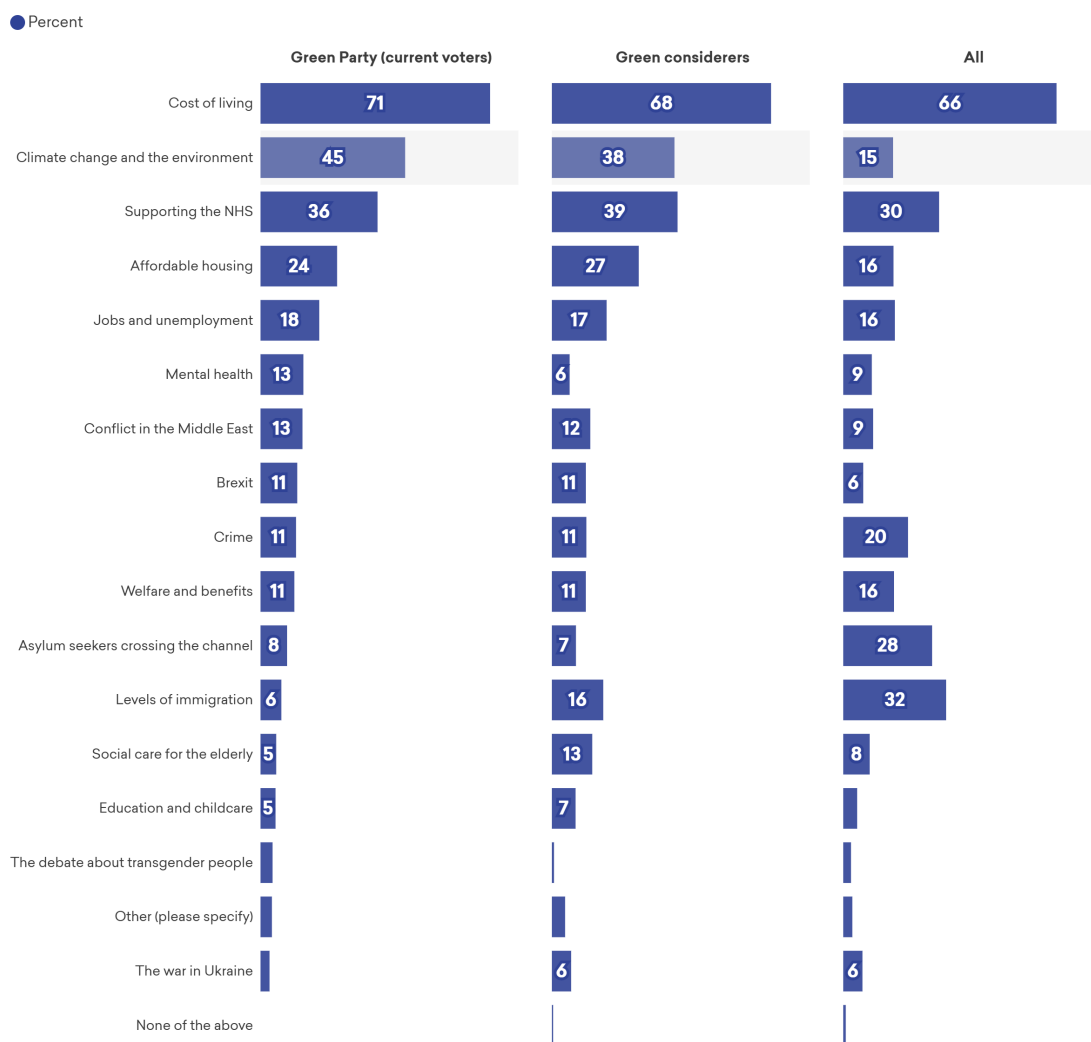
Furthermore, while Polanski's shift towards eco-populism doesn't appear to have shifted headline perceptions of the Greens yet, it has impacted views of himself. 69 per cent of Britons think the Greens care either greatly or a bit about protecting nature and wildlife but just 31 per cent of Britons think it is important for Polanski. This gap of 38 percentage points between party and leader is by far the largest gap of any of the five major party leaders tested. While Polanski's comparatively low levels of perceived prioritisation of nature haven't fed into the Greens' brand significantly yet, it is conceivable that this could change in the future.

If this were to happen, then this could be extremely damaging for the Greens as they still perform best among voters who care most about environmental issues. Even among the party's newer, younger progressive base, climate and nature are more motivating than they are for any other party's supporters. Crucially, the same holds for the voters the Greens could win. Among their potential pool of considerers, nature and environmental issues carry markedly higher salience than among the public as a whole, and these voters continue to see the Green's care for nature as the party's greatest strength. This firmly cuts against the received wisdom that expanding the Green vote requires pivoting away from these issues. Indeed, Green voters are the least likely to think that politicians need to focus

less on nature issues to allow them to focus on sorting out more important issues like the cost of living.

Green considerers are more than twice as likely to name climate as a top issue facing the country

Which, if any, of the following do you think are the biggest issues facing the country today?
Select up to three.



The Greens' vulnerability on nature is therefore not ownership but credibility. Polanski is the leader Britons most readily believe cares about nature personally, yet he ranks fourth on the capability to deliver changes that would safeguard it. That gap between prioritisation and capability is widest precisely among the nature-motivated voters who are considering the Greens but are yet to make the switch. Labour, meanwhile, has clear and so far unexploited vulnerabilities of its own on nature. Should the issue of nature rise in

salience, it offers the Greens a route to re-engage disillusioned progressives who have recently moved back to the Labour Party under Burnham.

Conclusion

For anyone familiar with British public opinion, it comes as no surprise that Britons love nature.

This report demonstrates how this love unites the public, and spans all of the divides that define British politics: young and old, urban and rural, graduate and non-graduate; and crucially it unites Britons on all sides of many of the big debates of our time: supporters and opponents of the net zero target, and people with varying viewpoints on housebuilding, development and economic growth.

Across these divides, Britons reject the binary choice between development and nature that commentators and politicians sometimes impose on this topic. Even when forced to confront this trade-off, the public firmly back the side of nature.

Despite this clear and profound love for nature – particularly the nature in their local area – many Britons feel like those in power are not doing enough to protect nature and wildlife in Britain. For some people, a sense that those with power are allowed to run roughshod over the nature they care about drives a belief that the priorities of politicians are out of step with their own.

Some assume that, while people care about nature personally, there are no votes to be won or lost on the topic. This report should serve as a clear course correction to this belief. Stances on nature play a role in shaping how Britons see politicians. Focus group conversations demonstrate that this is already driving votes at the local level, and politicians should be cautious of assuming that nature won't become salient on a national level too. Awareness of party policies on nature is low, but when presented with the stances of some parties and politicians, Britons often respond with frustration or concern – suggesting that if campaigners and political actors were to raise the salience and awareness of nature issues, it could come to help shape how Britons decide to vote.

Britons recognise that the country needs to build more homes and infrastructure. Their desire to protect nature within the planning system is not limitless. For example, 62 per cent of Britons back prioritising the protection of wildlife even if it makes it more expensive to build infrastructure, but by 52 per cent to 24 per cent they felt the £100m HS2 bat tunnel wasn't a good use of public funds.

However, politicians who want to deliver this housing and infrastructure should be extremely cautious of positioning themselves on the side of 'builders not bats and newts', because in doing so they risk not just an electoral backlash but an erosion of the public confidence that is needed to support this development.

If leaders pitch development against nature, the public will likely choose nature, but it risks undermining support for both. The public want to see Britain's nature regulations safeguarded, and to ensure they work well for humans, biodiversity and wildlife.

Appendix

Survey methodology

More in Common surveyed 2,006 adults from Great Britain with the respondents weighted to be representative of the British adults according to age and sex interlocked, region, ethnicity, education level and 2024 General Election vote. The surveys were completed from 7 – 10 August 2026.

Conjoint methodology

Respondents were presented with a choice between two politicians, each with randomised positions on key trade-offs politicians must face on the issues of asylum, energy, defence, arts and culture funding and nature protection policy. Respondents were asked to choose which politician's policy positions they saw more favourably with the randomised variation in policy positions in each iteration of the exercise allowing for an ascertainment of which policies push voters towards and away from politicians and in the case of this project, the extent to which a policy position of weakening protections for nature and wildlife in order to make it easier to build homes and infrastructure would win or lose politicians support.

Focus Group Criteria

Three online focus group conversations were held on 12 and 13 August. Participants were recruited to the following criteria:

Focus Group One

- All to be residents of Dorking and Horley constituency
- Mixture of ages and genders
- Mixture of 2024 Conservative and 2024 Liberal Democrat voters
- Current voting intention is mixture of Liberal Democrat and Conservatives
 - If current voting intention is Liberal Democrat, must be open to voting Conservative and vice versa
- Participants from a mixture of Traditional Conservative, Incrementalist Left and Established Liberal segments

Focus Group Two

- All to be residents of Enfield North constituency
- Mixture of ages and genders
- At least half to be from ethnic minority backgrounds
- None to own home outright (Must hold mortgage or be a renter)

- Mixture of 2024 Green and 2024 Labour voters
- Current voting intention is mixture of Green and Labour
 - If current voting intention is Green, must be open to voting Labour and vice versa
- Participants from a mixture of Progressive Activist and Incrementalist Left segments

Focus Group Three

- All to be residents of Makerfield constituency
- All to have voted for either Labour or Reform at the 2024 General Election
- Mixture of ages and genders
- Voted a mixture of Labour and Reform at the 2026 Makerfield By-election
 - If they voted for Labour, they must now be open to voting for Reform and vice versa
- From Rooted Patriot, Dissenting Disruptor, Sceptical Scroller and Incrementalist Left segments



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