



More in
Common



Can nature help Labour rebuild its coalition?



Sunday 27 September



18:30 to 19:30



Derwent Arena Room, Secure
Zone, ACC



**Luke
Tryl**
More in
Common



**Jenny Riddell-
Carpenter MP**
Parliamentary Under-
Secretary of State for Defra



**Toby
Perkins MP**
Chair, Environmental
Audit Committee



**Beccy
Speight**
RSPB



**Tanya
Steele**
WWF



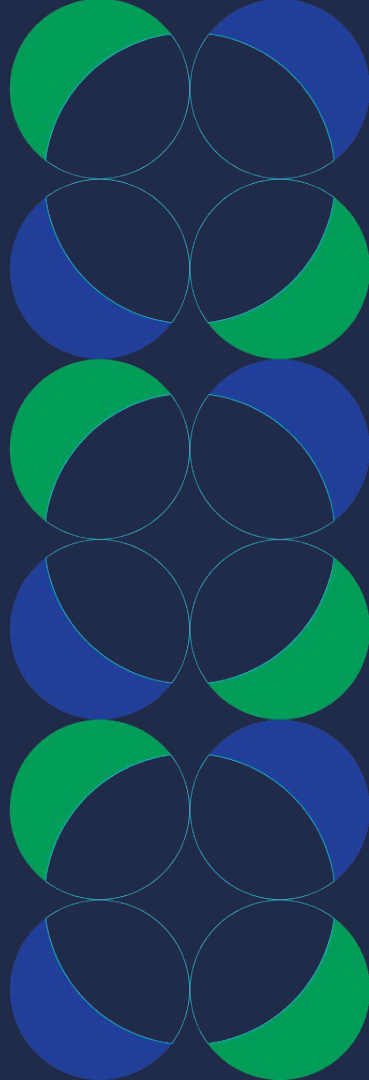
**Darren
Moorcroft**
Woodland Trust



**Hilary
McGrady**
National Trust



**Craig
Bennett**
The Wildlife Trusts



**Britons and
Labour voters
care deeply
about protecting
nature**



Protecting nature is extremely important for Britons and Labour voters

Britons care deeply about protecting nature and wildlife – 82 per cent say it is important to them personally.

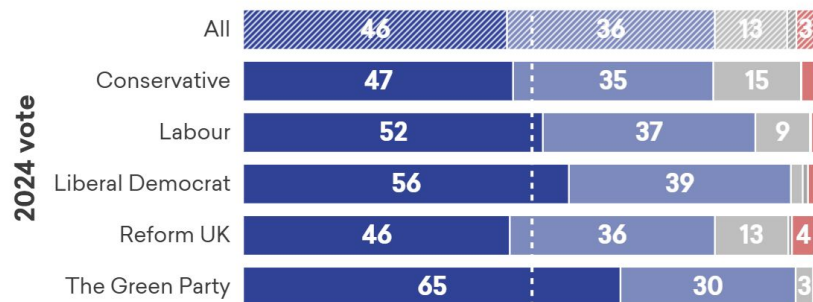
Protecting nature and wildlife is a unifying not polarising issue – among all the major parties, at least four in five of their voters say it is important to them personally.

2024 Labour voters are particularly likely to say it is important to them with half (52 per cent) saying it is very important to them.

Eight in ten Britons say protecting nature matters to them personally

How important is protecting nature and wildlife to you personally?

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



Nature and wildlife is a key source of local pride for Labour voters

Britons value protecting nature so much because they cherish its presence in their local communities.

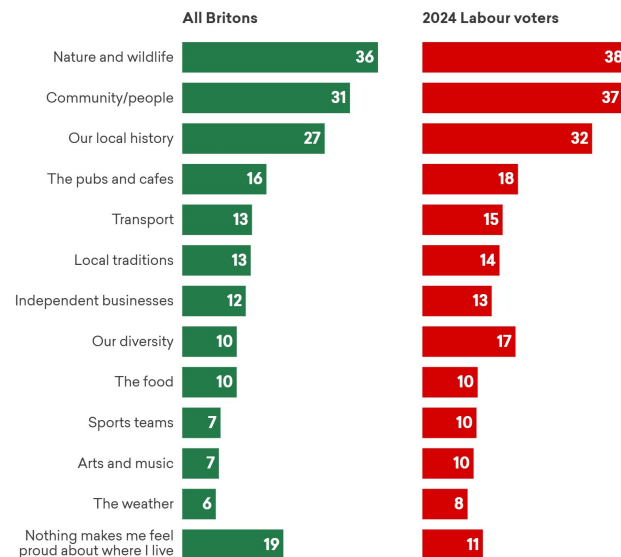
It is the thing they like most about their local area, and, crucially for a Labour government looking to restore pride in place, it is their largest source of local pride.

This holds true for voters of all major political parties.

As the government looks to show that it is able to make improvements to people's towns and communities, it would be well advised to ensure that improving local nature and wildlife plays a key part in this.

Nature and wildlife is what makes people proudest of where they live

What are the things that make you most proud of where you live?



But Britons and Labour voters think nature is under threat

While Britons love their local nature and wildlife, they worry deeply about the state of it.

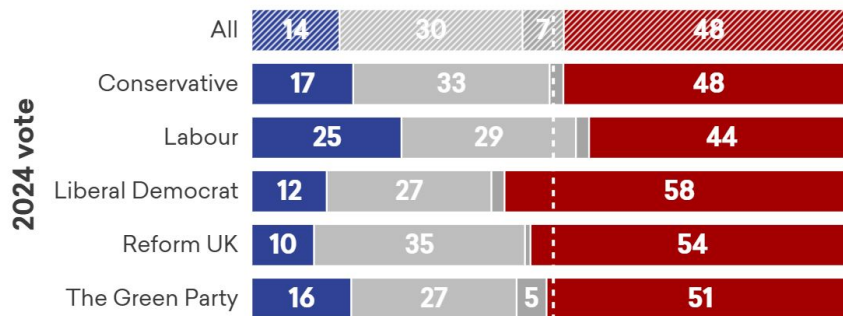
Just under half of Britons (48 per cent) say that the state of nature in the UK is declining.

Notably, 2024 Labour voters are slightly more optimistic about the state of nature. A quarter say it is improving, with 44 per cent saying it is declining. Reform voters are more negative than the general public – 54 per cent of 2024 Reform voters say nature is in decline.

Half of Britons think nature in the UK is declining

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

● Improving ● Staying about the same ● Don't know ● Declining



And they don't think politicians care about protecting nature

There is a real divide between how much the public care about protecting nature and wildlife and how much they see their politicians caring about it.

While 82 per cent of Britons say that protecting nature is important to them personally, just 32 per cent say they think it is important to the country's politicians. 38 per cent say it is not important to their politicians.

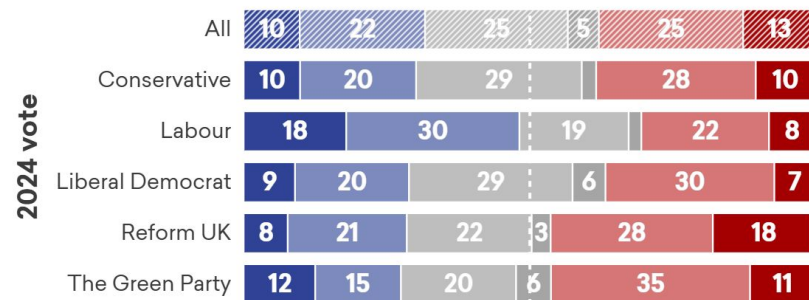
2024 Labour voters again stand out as being slightly more optimistic – 48 per cent feel politicians do see the protection of nature and wildlife as being important, compared to 30 per cent who say the contrary.

Voters of the more insurgent and anti-system Reform and Green voters are most likely to say they don't think protecting nature is important to Britain's politicians.

Britons doubt nature matters to politicians - though Labour voters are less likely to say this

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

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



Government failure to take action risks reinforcing feelings that those with power can get away with it

A sense that the government doesn't care about the decline of nature is also contributing to a feeling that politicians and regulators are letting those with power who harm the environment get away with it.

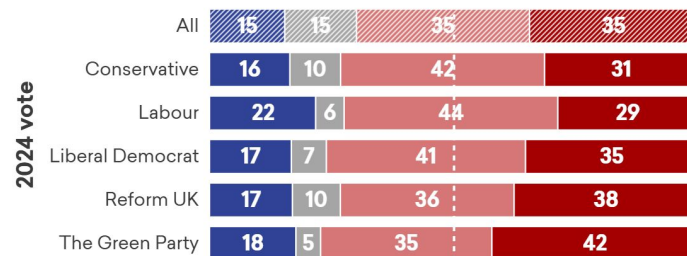
Just 15 per cent of Britons think that when large companies or powerful individuals harm nature and wildlife, they are made to pay. In contrast, a third (35 per cent) say the government may try, but often fail, to make companies pay and a third (35 per cent) say they don't seem to care. This sentiment is most strongly felt by Green voters.

Andy Burnham's focus on tackling large-scale fly-tipping sites will likely be an effective route to addressing these feelings of the system being broken – asked in August, 52 per cent of Britons thought the government's decision to fund the clearing of Britain's three largest illegal waste dumps was a good use of taxpayers' money.

Just one in seven think companies are made to pay when they damage 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 do make companies pay
- Don't know
- They try but often fail to make companies pay
- Governments and regulators seem to not care



**Britons reject a
need to trade off
nature**

The background of the slide is a dark navy blue. On the right side, there are several overlapping circles. One circle is a medium blue, another is a bright green, and a third is a slightly lighter shade of the dark navy blue. The circles overlap in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement.

Britons think you can protect nature and tackle the cost of living

While the cost of living is Britons' top priority, they overwhelmingly reject a zero-sum approach to tackling it. 70 per cent say they think the government can both reduce the cost of living and protect nature, so both should be top priorities. In contrast, only 18 per cent say the need to tackle the cost of living means the government can't afford to treat protecting nature as a top priority.

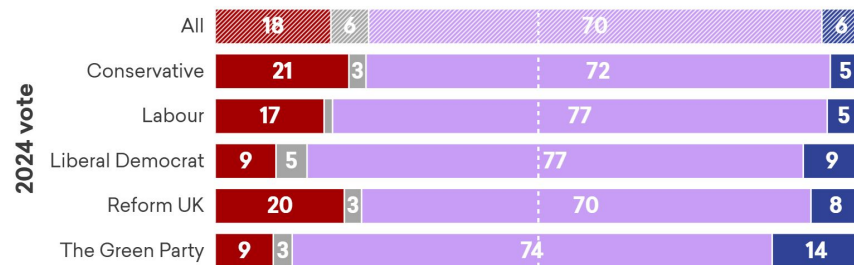
Labour voters are particularly likely to reject this tradeoff – 77 per cent of them say tackling the cost of living and protecting nature can both be top priorities.

Labour politicians would be wrong to assume that if voters hear them talking about protecting nature, they will think they aren't taking the cost of living seriously.

Seven in ten say government can protect nature and tackle 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
- Don't know
- The government can protect both nature and tackle the cost of living crisis, so both should be top priorities
- Protecting nature is so important that it has to be the top priority above tackling the cost of living



Britons don't think environmental regulations are inhibiting development

While some commentators and activists can pit protecting nature as being in conflict with Britain's need to build more homes and infrastructure, this is a tradeoff the British public rejects.

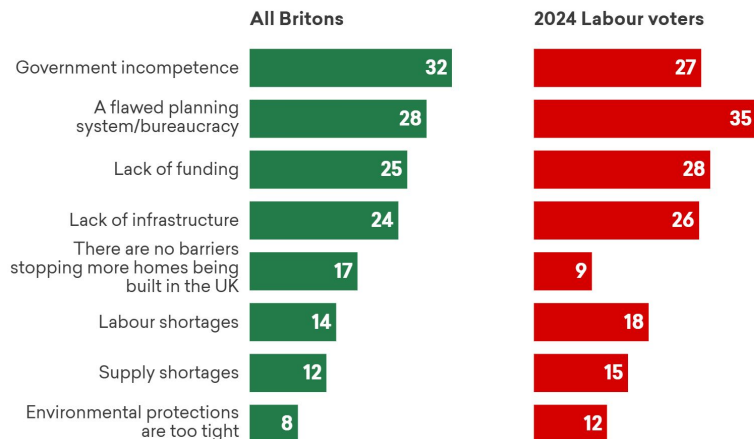
Only eight per cent of Britons say overly strict environmental protections are one of the biggest challenges to the government building more homes.

This holds for Labour voters as well – only 12 per cent of them say overly tight environmental protections are one of the biggest barriers to development.

In focus group conversations, voters make it clear that they think development and nature protection can be done together.

Few blame environmental protections for the slow pace of housebuilding

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 two)



The political implications



The last government's approach to nature was a hidden weakness

Despite their care and concern for nature, most voters do not currently see it as a political issue.

However, this is partly because there is little knowledge of the parties' different positions on the topic.

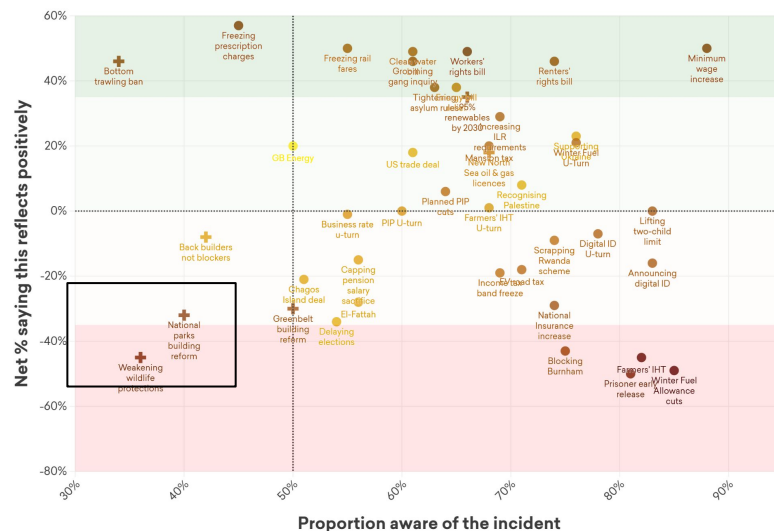
For example, the Starmer government's planning reforms to weaken wildlife protection and enable more building in National Parks and greenbelt land were among their most unpopular policies. Yet, awareness of them is extremely low.

If the new government continues in the same direction on nature, this could risk an electoral backlash, should opposition parties and campaigners succeed in raising public awareness of its actions and rhetoric on the issue.

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 +



Labour voters prefer pro-nature politicians

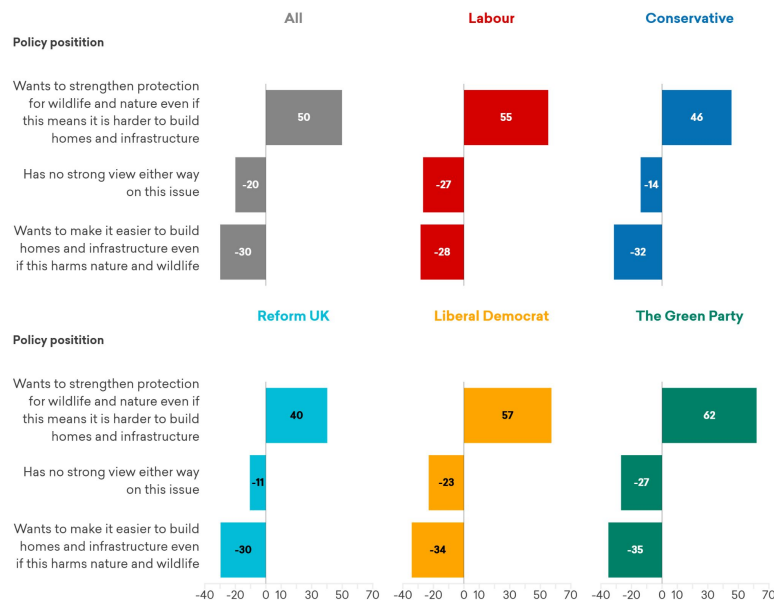
A conjoint experiment showed that Britons of all parties see pro-nature politicians far more favourably than politicians who prioritise making it easier to build. It also showed that, of the five issues tested, a politician's position on nature was the second most important factor, behind only asylum, in determining which politician they viewed more favourably. These findings were particularly pronounced among Labour voters.

While nature may not currently be driving the votes of Britons, when presented with information on their policy approaches to the issue, it can significantly shift perceptions of politicians.

Just because nature isn't yet deciding many votes outside of the local level doesn't mean it can't in the future – particularly if Labour puts itself on the wrong side of public opinion.

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 by voters.



An opportunity to create a popular point of difference with Reform?

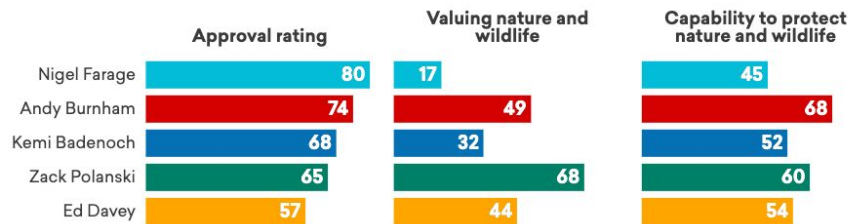
While Nigel Farage has the highest approval among his voters of any leader, he has the lowest proportion of his own voters who say he values nature, along with the lowest number of own party voters who say he can protect nature and wildlife.

While many of Reform's voters may share the scepticism of their party's leadership on net zero, they overwhelmingly care about nature.

There is an opportunity for Labour to appeal directly towards its Reform defectors by developing and communicating a stronger stance than Reform on nature protection.

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)



"It was one of the things that was swinging my vote was the fact that they were saying they want to push is to 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 don't want someone to come and take it away because they want to make a few extra quid." [Dan, Sales Admin, Makerfield](#)