

Our Manifesto for Nature



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A call for government action on nature

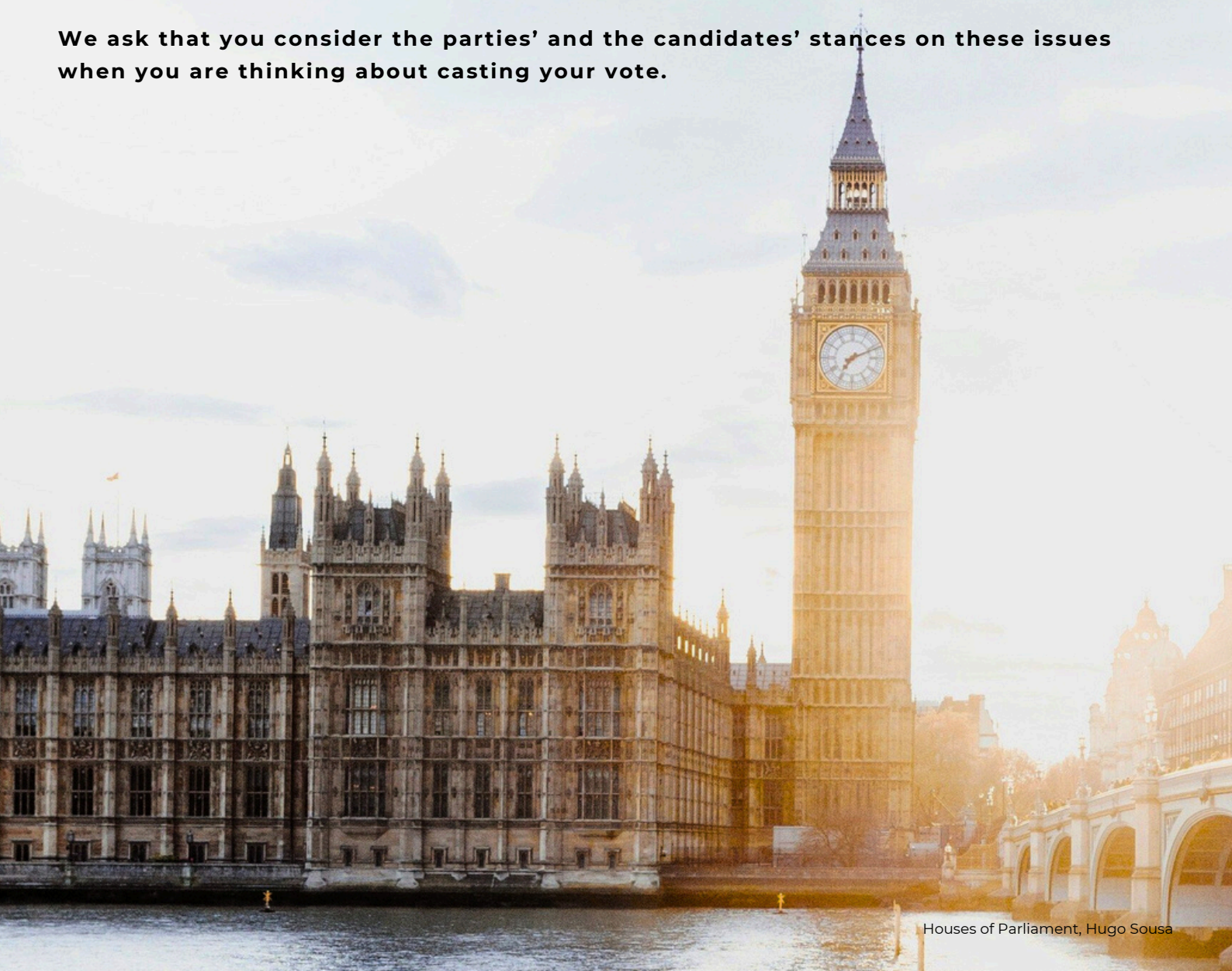
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's vision is for a sustainable future for wildlife and people. Whilst we can all take action that makes a difference for nature and the environment, realising this vision at the scale needed can only be achieved with the help of supportive government policies.

The stakes have never been higher; with the urgent need to tackle the biodiversity and climate crises, we are at a pivotal time in history for nature and humanity. Much rests on the actions we all take in the next few years for nature's recovery and ensuring a healthy environment for future generations.

Historically, most UK governments have been in power for close to the maximum 5-year term. Policies, support, legislation and effective enforcement by the next government will be crucial in delivering on national and international targets for nature and tackling climate change by 2030.

We set out overleaf our manifesto for nature. In our view, these are key issues that require effective government support for nature and people in Wiltshire and Swindon.

We ask that you consider the parties' and the candidates' stances on these issues when you are thinking about casting your vote.





Giving young people a voice

In preparing our manifesto, we felt it was important to take into account the generation who will be most impacted by the decisions taken that affect the environment and nature over the next few years, yet are too young to vote. So, with the help of schools, parents and our Young Ambassadors, we surveyed the views of young people.

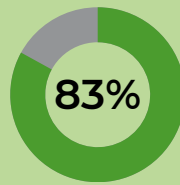
The many survey responses and ideas we received clearly show how much young people care, think and worry about nature and the environment. Thanks to all those who filled in surveys and encouraged others to complete them. The views of the young people who submitted survey responses have helped inform our manifesto.

Highlights from the survey:

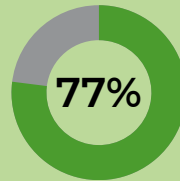
- Nature is important to the overwhelming majority
- Most are worried about extinction and climate change
- Many think Government isn't doing enough to tackle climate change
- Under half think they can make a difference without more support



80% think government should do more to tackle climate change



83% regularly engage with nature



77% are worried about climate change but only 52% know what action they can take to mitigate climate change

"I think schools should have a day 2-3 times a year where they plant trees, and vegetables."

Edward, age 10

"We should use cars less and walk more, which helps us to exercise too!"

Robyn, age 11



Priorities for action

We would like to see the next Government provide effective support to bring about these key changes for nature and people in Swindon and Wiltshire:



Bring back Wiltshire's wildlife

One in six species is at risk of extinction in the UK. Wiltshire is no exception. Our research has revealed 132 species that urgently need our help in Wiltshire, including the lapwing, which gives us our logo.

- Increase native species abundance and diversity by increasing resources for protection and restoration of precious habitats such as chalk downland at landscape-scale.
- Increase funding to protect threatened species like the water vole and tackle invasive species such as Himalayan balsam.
- Make enough space for nature to reverse its decline. 30% of land should be actively managed for nature by 2030, which is double the level in Wiltshire at present.
- Provide more opportunities and grants for green jobs and traineeships.



Fund wildlife-friendly farming

Wiltshire is a farming county; 80% of our land is farmed. Nature-friendly farmers hold the key to restoring nature's abundance and they need support, especially from Government. Many farmers and land managers have gone to great lengths to support wildlife but without being adequately rewarded.

- Increase national funding for wildlife-friendly farming to at least £4.4 billion per year, ensuring a fair transition for farmers whilst providing healthier, affordable food and improving food security.
- Halve pesticide use and maintain complete bans on neonicotinoids that kill bees and harm human health once and for all.
- Ensure farmers have access to advisors who can help them find resilient and profitable routes to nature-friendly farming.



Protect Wiltshire's chalk streams

Our globally important chalk streams - lifelines for species such as otters and brown trout - are particularly vulnerable to pollution, especially when it gets concentrated when water levels get low in summer.

- Introduce new protection for all chalk streams from the threats of over-abstraction and pollution, as recommended by the Chalk Stream Strategy.
- Invest in nature-based solutions, backed by effective monitoring technology. The Sustainable Solutions for Water and Nature (SSWAN) collaboration, of which we are a partner, has shown that wetland restoration, alongside soil-friendly regenerative farming, can slow, store and filter water, reducing the risk of flooding downstream and cleaning water naturally.
- Increase support for community initiatives that strengthen monitoring and cleanup of rivers, such as our Blue Influencers and Water Guardians programmes.

Priorities for action

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Family in nature, Jon Hawkins

Enable healthy, thriving communities in Wiltshire & Swindon

We are living through a mental health crisis. Since Covid started, there has been a huge increase in the number of people suffering from poor mental health and wellbeing, with many unable to work or be in traditional educational settings. The NHS is not resourced to meet the burgeoning demand for mental health care. Nature experiences are proven to improve health and wellbeing. With our broad range of wellbeing in nature work and Care Farms, the Trust is a leader in combatting the health and wellbeing crisis for adults and children.

- Increase provision of local wellbeing services, such as ecotherapy and green prescribing.
- Improve access to nature for all by connecting landscapes with people and increasing green and blue spaces in urban areas so that everyone is within 15 minutes' walk of high quality natural space.
- Give every child the best start in life by supporting outdoor and alternative environmental education.

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West Chisenbury river restoration, HQ SPTA

Tackle the climate emergency

Climate change is affecting all wildlife and people. 2023 was the hottest year on record. Nature, livelihoods, food and water sources are all at risk from flooding, drought and extremes of climate right here in Wiltshire.

- Invest in nature-based solutions to adapt to and mitigate climate change, such as reconnecting rivers with floodplains to reduce the risk of flooding.
- Double the Community Energy Fund to help communities develop their own renewable energy solutions, like those supported by Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy.
- Increase support for homeowners and businesses to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions.

About Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust is part of the UK Wildlife Trusts movement and was founded in 1962, driven by a concern to protect local wildlife and natural habitats. Today, our vision is to create a sustainable future for wildlife and people.

Over our 62-year history, we've pioneered and led landscape-scale change. We are unique in the county in combining the management of over 40 nature reserves and working with local communities to provide educational and wellbeing activities. We see people as a part of nature and access to nature as fundamental to wellbeing.

In 2023, we published our strategy to 2030, which sets out how we will restore nature rapidly and at scale, and inspire people to live more sustainably. Read more at: www.wiltshirewildlife.org/strategy