



Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report

22 December 2023

Submitted to:

Ross Gillard

The Office for Environmental Protection

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Policy Mapping Thriving Plants & Wildlife Final Report

A report submitted by [ICF Consulting Services Limited](#)

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1 Introduction

1.1 This report

This is a final deliverable of a contract awarded to ICF (supported by CECAN Ltd and Matthew Baumann Associates) by the Office of Environmental Protection (OEP) to support the OEP in its scrutiny of the UK government's implementation of the Environmental Improvement Plan. This introductory chapter:

- Describes the strategic context to the assignment (section 1.2);
- Explains the objectives of the ICF contract and how they have been addressed (section 1.3).
- Introduces the remaining sections of the report (section 1.4).

Other contract deliverables (such as a set of graphic images) are provided under separate cover.

1.2 Context

The need for effective policy for protecting and improving the natural environment has never been more urgent. The 2023 State of Nature¹ report highlights the continuing decline of UK biodiversity. Climate change, land use change, resource management are among the major drivers of biodiversity loss. This biodiversity crisis threatens the complex environmental systems that underpin the economy, people's livelihoods, health and well-being.

The UK government committed to sustained environmental improvement in the 25 Year Environment Plan². Since its publication in 2018, policy actions and incentives have been adopted to deliver progress towards the targets. Policy has been evolving, with numerous strategies, action plans, policies, programmes and funding streams being developed, updated, revised and expanded.

The OEP was created under the Environment Act 2021 to protect and improve the environment by holding the government and relevant public authorities to account in England and Northern Ireland³. Its first power and duty is to scrutinise the government's environmental improvement plans and environment targets and monitor, critically assess and report on progress towards them. To achieve this, the OEP needs a comprehensive understanding of what the government is doing and how it plans to achieve its goals and commitments.

In the OEP's first monitoring report on the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, *Taking stock: protecting, restoring and improving the environment in England (2022)*⁴, it recommended that government:

- Create a clearer vision for its ambition;
- Provide coherence and hierarchy to targets;

¹ [TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report_2023_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf \(stateofnature.org.uk\)](#)

² [25-year-environment-plan.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [What we do | Office for Environmental Protection \(theoep.org.uk\)](#). OEP's work covers England and Northern Ireland and reserved matters across the UK.

⁴ [Taking stock: protecting, restoring and improving the environment in England \(theoep.org.uk\)](#)

- Provide understanding of how targets relate to one another and how they lead to the achievement of overarching goals.

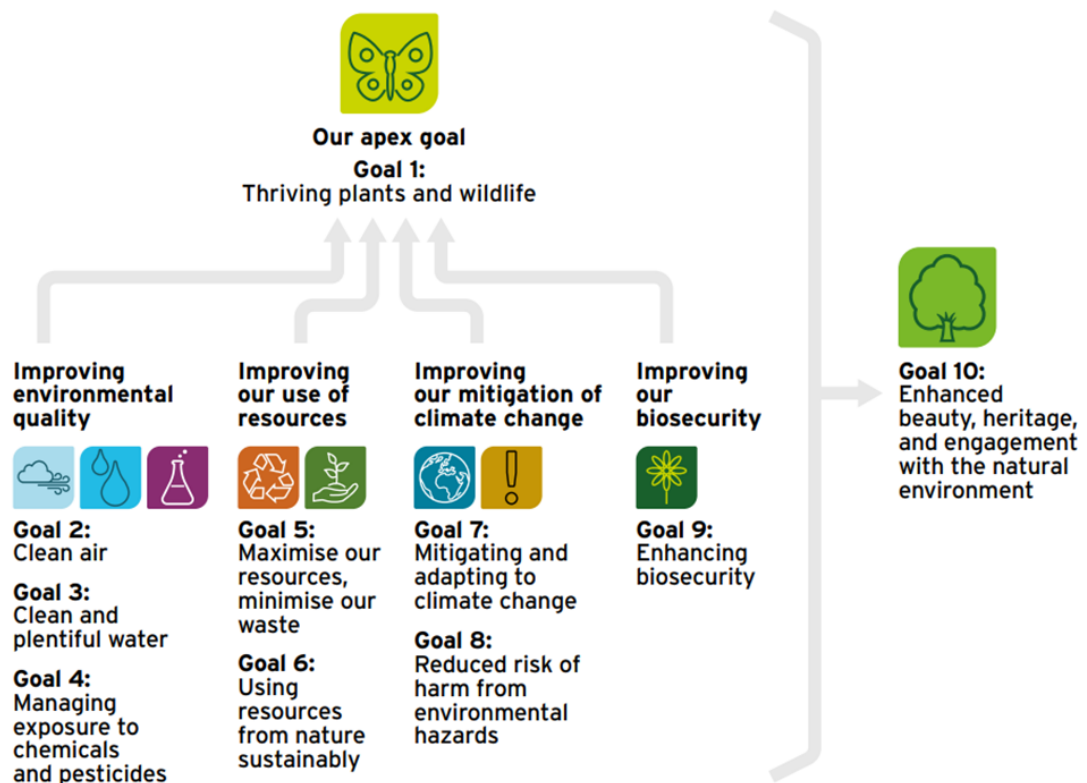
The OEP also commented on a lack of coherence to the strategies and policies aimed at delivering the targets. It recommended that the government integrate delivery plans to ensure that strategies and policies complement each other, ensuring effective delivery. Without an overview of how the many related strands of work link to deliver on targets, the ability of the OEP to carry out its functions and report on progress in the delivery of the Thriving Plants and Wildlife (TPW) goal is constrained.

In January 2023, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), published its first update of the 25YEP in the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023⁵. As part of this updated plan, government has specified a hierarchy of goals, and describes actions intended to achieve those goals, and signposting some of the environmental pressures that the strategies and policies aim to address. TPW is identified as the apex goal in the EIP and Chapter 1 describes actions contributing to the delivery of that goal.

The achievement of the TPW goal is reliant on achieving improvements in other areas and across nine other goals:

Figure 1.1 Defra’s EIP 2023 Goals, taken from [Environmental Improvement Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Connections between our environmental goals



- Improving environmental quality:

⁵ [Environmental Improvement Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- Goal 2: Clean air
 - Goal 3: Clean and plentiful water
 - Goal 4: Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides
 - Improving use of resources:
 - Goal 5: to maximise resources and minimise waste
 - Goal 6: Using resources from nature sustainably
 - Improving mitigation of climate change:
 - Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - Goal 8: Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards
 - Improving biosecurity:
 - Goal 9: Enhancing biosecurity
- and an additional goal:
- Goal 10: Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

For each goal, the EIP sets out the targets that government has committed itself to achieving and the actions that are intended to achieve them. The actions are organised by delivery themes. The TPW chapter is set out according to eight delivery themes:

- 1) Creating more joined up space for nature on land – protecting land and increasing interconnections to boost natural resilience.
- 2) Restoring our protected sites on land – tackling increasing pressures on our most valuable sites and building their long-term resilience.
- 3) Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry – delivering co-benefits for nature and climate.
- 4) Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments – taking a holistic approach to coastal and marine protection.
- 5) Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species – such as tailored conservation strategies and habitat creation.
- 6) Mobilising green finance and the private sector – drawing on the increasing interest in investing in nature.
- 7) Taking action to restore our global environment – supporting other countries to take the action we role model domestically.
- 8) Unlocking private and public financial finance flows – ensuring that we grow new sources of finance for nature

By organising the EIP in this way, the government aims to explain the coherence of strategies and policies that are intended to deliver the targets.

However, many stakeholders recognise that there is a need for further clarity on how the many component parts of the policy system in this area fit together. This will provide reassurance that the component parts are collectively sufficient to achieve the TPW goal. There is a pressing need to obtain an overview of the actions and initiatives designed to support TPW and to better understand how they interact.

The OEP commissioned analysis from ICF to provide this understanding by reviewing and mapping current government actions relevant to the targets and commitments of TPW, the EIP apex goal. The work will inform the OEP's analysis and reporting of delivery progress. It will also contribute evidence on how the diverse actions related to delivering TPW contribute to the government's targets and commitments for England over time.

1.3 Contract aims and objectives

By reviewing and mapping current government actions relevant to the targets and commitments of TPW, this project aims to improve understanding of the government's intended path to delivery of the TPW goal. The project has three main objectives:

Objective 1: Identify, prioritise, and catalogue government actions that will affect the achievement of the TPW targets and commitments.

Disparate, published information on government actions to achieve the TPW were extracted from the EIP and other relevant government documents. These were collated in a searchable catalogue, making information about each action and groups of actions more amenable to retrieval, analysis and reporting. The OEP can maintain and use this database to inform its analysis of government's progress.

The analysis focused on government actions listed in Chapter 1 of the EIP (rather than covering all the goals) and focused on actions that are relevant to England. The full methodology for creating the catalogue is outlined Section 3 Methodology.

Objective 2: Produce a delivery pathway that explains how these actions are intended to achieve the TPW targets and commitments.

Analysis of the catalogue showed that addressing Objective 2 as originally specified would not be possible in the timeframe, resources and with limited access to stakeholders. To causally map activities to each other (interdependences) and the relationships between actions and goals, outcomes and targets would have required a) detailed information about these relationships set out in the published documentation or b) access to a panel of experts with deep knowledge of the ecological, political and social systems and pressures that affect the apex goal of TWP, and c) considerably more time than was available for this task.

As these parameters were unmet, the scope of this objective was revised. It was agreed that ICF would produce four visualisations of government actions defined in Chapter 1 of the EIP. These would organise and structure government activity collected in the catalogue, making the information more accessible and easier to communicate in public reporting by OEP. A process of iterative collaborative design was used to produce visualisations that convey the key messages most appropriately.

These visualisations show:

- Graphic 1: Overview of EIP Chapter 1 TPW, Actions and Targets for England/UK
- Graphic 2: The EIP Delivery Partner Landscape
- Graphic 3: Progress on Actions for TPW in England
- Graphic 4: TPW Actions of Interest to the OEP

OEP may use these in its annual report to Parliament on progress with delivering the EIP, in other publications, and on its website. They may also be useful for Defra

and its delivery partners, and environment sector stakeholders, as they provide, in an accessible format, information about government activities defined under EIP Chapter 1 that will deliver progress towards the TPW. They also provide an indication of the level of maturity of actions / delivery themes; something that is not provided in the EIP or other Government sources.

The graphics are descriptive, rather than evaluative, i.e., they are intended to describe the activity rather than provide an evaluative assessment of its adequacy or impact. Describing and providing structure to the activity in this area is a necessary first step for the OEP in its consideration of options for future evaluation and analysis.

Objective 3 Create interactive adaptable visualisations that OEP can use to illustrate key information from the catalogue

A dashboard, suitable for web hosting, has been created to enable the OEP to produce interactive graphics relevant to the TPW goal. The catalogue, visualisations and dashboard are intended to be complementary.

The catalogue captures details of the EIP actions, breaking them down into discrete elements with a line per action. This captures details of individual action and enables sorting and filtering by attributes of interest. However, the action-specific detail is not contextualised in the wider system they are part of.

The visualisations group and structure the information from the catalogue allowing it to be viewable on a single page or screen. Achieving a legible and comprehensible visualisation required some simplification of the material in the catalogue.

The interactive dashboard can filter, sort and search for information included in the catalogue according to user needs, providing outputs in an accessible format. As the dashboard is linked to the catalogue, any changes or updates made to the catalogue are reflected in the dashboard.

1.4 Structure of this report

Section 2 of this report describes:

- **Production of the Catalogue:** including, a description of the catalogue headings (and, where relevant, the decisions taken in the development of these), and details of the protocol used by the research team when populating the catalogue.
- **Production of Graphics from EIP Chapter 1:** including a description of how, and why, particular graphics were chosen for development. Graphics were then supplied to the OEP in an editable format so that adjustments could be made to their format to fit in with their reporting.

Section 3 presents each of the four graphics. It provides a commentary on the information the graphic contains, findings that emerged during the production of the graphic and questions raised in development of the graphics.

2 Methodology

This section describes the methods used for each of the three objectives of project.

2.1 Production of the Catalogue

Catalogue development was an iterative process that involved liaising with the OEP on the type of information it wished to include. A draft catalogue template was developed using this top-down perspective.

The catalogue was then tested by extracting relevant information from the EIP for a sample of actions. The ICF team suggested admissions, alterations and additions to the extraction template based on its developing knowledge of the data and from the experience populating the template, through a bottom-up, data led approach. Throughout the process of building the catalogue, headings were discussed and defined in the meta data to ensure accurate recording of information.

The headings used in the final version of the catalogue template are described below. Where relevant, the method for developing the heading and relevant categories are noted.

2.1.1 Action title and description

Action Title: A short title of the action, either provided by Defra/EIP or given by ICF based on the description of the action in the documentation.

Action Description: The sentence or text that describes the action in the EIP. In few cases, where only a limited description was provided, descriptions were expanded on using publicly available information / ICF knowledge of the action.

2.1.2 Action typology

An 'action' was defined by the OEP as a catchall term to encompass everything that the UK government suggests it will do to deliver on 'TPW' in England. Examples of actions include paying farmers or landowners, updating strategies and creating woodlands.

As an action typology is not specifically described in the EIP, a typology was developed for the classification of actions. Typologies considered in the initial development of the catalogue included the ROAMEF cycle⁶ (Table 2.1) as well as the Policy Lab category⁷ (Table 2.2).

Table 2.1 An indicative list of suggested definitions given for each of the types of activities provided by the OEP

ROAMEF	Activity	Definition
Rationale, Objectives, Appraisal	Design	Any steps taken towards or announcements about a policy's mission and vision, strategic objectives, rationale, options appraisal, quantification, scope and key features
	Research	Any steps taken towards or announcements about a policy's mission and vision, strategic objectives,

⁶ [Monitoring and evaluation strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

⁷ [Introducing a 'Government as a System' toolkit - Policy Lab \(blog.gov.uk\)](http://blog.gov.uk)

ROAMEF	Activity	Definition
		rationale, options appraisal, quantification, scope and key features. Commissioning, undertaking or publishing research to gather evidence to understand the problems and solutions. Any piloting or testing of ideas.
	Consultation	Requesting, gathering and analysing input from stakeholders and experts in order to inform policy.
	Targets	Statements of intent that quantify the desired level of performance, based on measurable indicators.
	Funding	Statements about the amount or types of funding
Monitoring (implementation)	Delivery	Steps taken to implement policies and projects
	Collaboration	Forums, or their actions, that bring stakeholders together to achieve shared objectives
	Monitoring	Gathering information about the implementation context
Evaluation, Feedback	Evaluation	Research and analysis to assess the design, implementation and outcomes of policies.
	Learning	Any activity that uses feedback, or creates opportunities for its use, to improve policy

Table 2.2 A list of types of government action, as defined and described by Policy Lab

Policy Lab Action	Definition
Influence	Includes actions such as advising, lobbying, agenda setting, role modelling, auditing, governing, publishing and scrutinising.
Engage	Includes actions such as listening, informing, consulting, convening, collaborating, negotiating, running elections and setting standards.
Design	Includes actions such as connecting, engaging, analysing, modelling, piloting and more.
Develop	Includes actions such as championing, agreeing, partnering, drafting, legislating and more.
Resource	Includes actions such as charging, incentivising, contracting, co-funding, investing and more.
Deliver	Includes actions such as nudging, educating, providing, reforming, protecting and more.
Control	Includes actions such as devolving, providing assurance, licensing, enforcing, sanctioning, prosecuting and more.

Source: Policy Lab [Introducing a 'Government as a System' toolkit - Policy Lab \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

It proved difficult to populate the catalogue using both sets of action categories. The ROAMEF typology describes stages in the development of a particular policy cycle. Use of this typology was challenging as the EIP contains many different types of actions, all of which have their own cycles of progress and development. The Policy Lab typology focusses on the mechanism or 'types' of actions government can conduct or facilitate. This was useful as a starting point but using the typology's high-level categories (Table 2.2) proved challenging as actions seemed to fall under more than one category.

A new typology was therefore developed for this assignment (Table 2.3), informed by the ROAMEF and Policy Lab typologies. It was intended to allow actions to be placed in a discrete category, preventing overlaps where possible, and reflect the type of government actions relevant to the EIP.

Table 2.3 Action Typology

Framing the problem and solutions	Putting in place interventions/measures	Supporting successful delivery of programmes and interventions
1. Strategies & Frameworks	4. Designation and management of an area	8. Advice, guidance and other support
2. Research, evidence, testing & piloting	5. Conservation or management of a species	9. Monitoring and evaluation
3. Consultation, engagement & collaboration	6. Green Finance, funding or incentive scheme	
	7. Regulation, legislation and control measures	

The allocation of actions to these categories was undertaken by the researchers using expert judgement. This judgement was based on descriptions of actions in the EIP and other published materials.

2.1.3 Action maturity

An assessment of the progress of each action was made based on information provided in the EIP. Given limited information in the EIP, actions were assigned to rudimentary categories of ‘under consideration’, ‘in development’ and ‘in progress’:

- **Under consideration** – these are ideas the government is exploring. There may be acknowledgement or awareness of a gap or a potential solution may have been identified, but no direct action has been ‘agreed’
- **In development** – in this case some agreement for action has been achieved, and the solution or aspects of it are being clarified e.g., development of proposals, exploring options, scoping exercises.
- **In progress** - the action is underway with published information available.

We developed a framework for ‘action maturity’ to underpin and guide our classification of actions that set out the kinds of things that, for each ‘type’ of action, would indicate that it was either under consideration, in development or in progress. The full framework can be found in Annex 0.

The research team’s judgement about whether an action is ‘under consideration’, in development or in progress’ was informed by both publicly available information and team knowledge.

The allocation of actions to categories of maturity is intended to indicate where in the policy process each action currently is. We have not assessed:

- how far actions have progressed within the broad categories
- the adequacy in principle of these actions for their intended purpose
- how well these actions are being delivered or how successful they are

The purposes is to provide a structure and to support understanding of government’s progress with developing and delivering the actions listed in the EIP.

2.1.4 Upcoming milestone

Where the EIP included information on government's commitments to achieving outputs or targets by specific dates or specified upcoming milestones for actions, these dates were captured in the catalogue and a description of the milestone provided. This information was not available in the EIP for all actions so this field is incomplete in the catalogue.

2.1.5 Scale of delivery

This captured any information provided in the EIP on the scale of the activity. As action types varied, the information under this heading also varied. Examples are number of projects, selected regions or localities, extent of area. This information was not available in the EIP for all actions but was also not necessarily relevant for all actions.

2.1.6 Environmental biome

Actions were classified as covering either **terrestrial** (land based), **freshwater** (rivers, lakes) or **marine** (coastal and offshore). In most cases the allocation process was straightforward, however, some terrestrial actions, such as nature friendly farming actions, are also likely to cover freshwater systems and therefore in these instances actions were allocated to multiple biomes.

2.1.7 Environmental pressure

This heading was used to identify the pressures on biodiversity that each action is intended to address. Most of the environmental pressures identified were taken from the 2019 State of Nature report⁸, i.e.:

- Land Management
- Climate change
- Urbanisation
- Pollution
- Hydrological change
- Invasive non-native species
- Woodland management

To these 'Fisheries' and 'Other marine extraction / development' were added to cover pressures more specific to the marine environment.

Some information regarding environmental pressures that actions aim to address was provided in the EIP, but this was not commonly at the individual action level. The research team used expert judgement (based on prior knowledge and analysis of information in the EIP) to identify which of the pressures the action aims to address. Given that there are inextricable links between ecosystems, actions listed within the EIP could directly and indirectly address many different environmental pressures. The aim of this task was to use best judgement to identify the primary pressures addressed by the action and not to identify all plausible indirect effects.

⁸ [State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf \(nbn.org.uk\)](https://www.nbn.org.uk/state-of-nature-2019-uk-full-report.pdf)

2.1.8 'Habitat' or 'Species'

The OEP requested that actions be differentiated by whether they predominately aim to address protection, management, improvement of 'habitat' or 'species'. It can be difficult to differentiate between actions that address habitat or species, as the predominant pressure on many species is the destruction, degradation or lack of habitat, therefore actions to restore habitat also support the restoration of species.

Expert judgement was made to allocate actions as to whether the action is more directly focussed at addressing improvements to habitat (which could in turn improve several species) or whether the action is more directly focussed on the conservation or management of specific species.

2.1.9 EIP Goal & delivery theme

The EIP is organised into the following 10 Goals:

- Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife
- Goal 2: Clean air
- Goal 3: Clean and plentiful water
- Goal 4: Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides
- Goal 5: Maximise our resources, minimise our waste
- Goal 6: Using resources from nature sustainably
- Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Goal 8: Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards
- Goal 9: Enhancing biosecurity
- Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

Each of these goals is then further broken down into delivery themes. For Goal 1: TPW, the delivery themes were:

- 1) Creating more joined up space for nature on land – protecting land and increasing interconnections to boost natural resilience.
- 2) Restoring our protected sites on land – tackling increasing pressures on our most valuable sites and building their long-term resilience.
- 3) Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry – delivering co-benefits for nature and climate.
- 4) Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments – taking a holistic approach to coastal and marine protection.
- 5) Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species – such as tailored conservation strategies and habitat creation.
- 6) Mobilising green finance and the private sector – drawing on the increasing interest in investing in nature.
- 7) Taking action to restore our global environment – supporting other countries to take the action we role model domestically.
- 8) Unlocking private and public financial finance flows – ensuring that we grow new sources of finance for nature

The priority for this project was to cover actions intended to deliver TPW in England, which includes delivery themes 1 – 6.

2.1.10 Contribution of actions to targets

A target is a commitment listed in the EIP that the government plans to achieve. Targets are typically quantifiable, with clear timeframes and parameters for success.

Review of Goal 1 of the EIP identified a variety of targets. For the purposes of the catalogue the actions were mapped against the following long-term targets and commitments:

Long-term legally-binding targets

The following targets are outlined in the Environment Act 2021 and are legally binding:

- Halting the decline of species abundance by 2030
- Increase species abundance so that it is greater than in 2022 and at least 10% greater than in 2030, by 2042
- Improve the GB Red List Index for species and increase species abundance by the end of 2042
- Restore or create 500,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites, by 2042
- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover from 14.5% to 16.5% of total land area in England by 2050
- 70% of designated features in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to be in favourable condition by 2042

Additional targets and commitments

The following targets are commitments made by government and are included in the EIP:

- Protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030
- Restore 75% of protected sites to favourable condition by 2042
- Raise £500 million a year in private finance by 2027 for nature recovery in England, rising to over £1 billion by 2030
- Achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) of our seas

The EIP mentions all the above targets and states that the delivery themes 1-8 will contribute to these targets. In some places the EIP specifically references how some actions will contribute to specific targets in either a qualitative or quantitative way:

“Agreements running from 2024 are expected to bring or maintain 37,000-48,000 hectares of eligible SSSI habitat in England under favourable management and deliver up to 300,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat (alongside up to 200,000 hectares of peat and woodland) creation and restoration by 2042.” pg 42 EIP

“The Species Survival Fund is specifically targeted towards our 2030 species abundance target” pg 51 of EIP

However, the EIP does not do this consistently throughout or provide a clear systematic map that attributes each action to each target it contributes to and to what degree.

The research team reviewed each action description and available information in the EIP. Where detail on the contribution of the action to achieving the targets was available from the EIP, this was added to the catalogue. Where this information was not available the research team used expert judgement (based on prior knowledge and publicly available information) to identify which of the targets the action best addresses or works toward.

2.1.11 Delivery partners

For the OEP to fulfil its duty to scrutinise governments' EIPs, it requires a clear understanding what is to be delivered, by whom and by when. This will enable the OEP to monitor and engage with delivery partners to acquire information on delivery status and assess its adequacy in terms of clarity on what is to be delivered when, the resources allocated to achieve objectives, and the governance, monitoring and reporting structures in place.

The EIP states that the plan *“has been developed with support from experts in Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, and others across the country”* but the delivery themes have little detail on the primary partners that are responsible or play a key role in the delivery of specific actions.

By capturing this information in the catalogue, the OEP will have better oversight of who some of the partners involved in the design and delivery of actions are. The types of organisations listed within this category include:

- **Ministerial government departments:** Such as Defra and Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)
- **Non- ministerial departments:** Such as Forestry Commission
- **Non-departmental public bodies:** Such as Natural England, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO)
- **Executive agencies:** Such as Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science and Rural Payments Agency
- **Local government:** Such as Local Authorities and Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities
- **Third sector and other organisations:** Such as Nature Conservation Organisations, Major Landowners Group , Protected Landscape Organisations

Information used to populate entries under this heading included the EIP, other public information and team knowledge of actions and their delivery. The list of delivery partners added to the catalogue is indicative only. Limited time and publicly available information about delivery partners' roles and responsibilities prevented a more comprehensive assessment.

2.1.12 Funding

Where public information was found on the funding allocation for the action, this was captured, but in most cases this information was unavailable. Information was usually only available for actions that were themselves dedicated funds or financial instruments (e.g. Species Survival Fund or Nature for Climate Fund).

2.1.13 Indicators

Indicators are points of measurement that can be used to determine the success of the policy. For the 10 goals of the 25YEP, Defra has developed an Outcome Indicator Framework⁹ which includes 66 indicators to describe environmental change. The EIP (p. 70) lists 15 indicators that are relevant for the TPW goal:

- C2 Seabed subject to high pressure from human activity
- C3 Diverse seas: status of marine mammals and marine birds
- C4 Diverse seas: condition of seafloor habitats
- C5 Diverse seas: condition of pelagic habitats
- C6 Diverse seas: status of threatened and declining features
- C7 Healthy seas: fish and shellfish populations
- C8 Healthy seas: marine food webs functioning
- C9 Healthy seas: seafloor habitats functioning
- D1 Quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats
- D2 Extent and condition of protected sites – land, water and sea
- D3 Area of woodland in England
- D4 Relative abundance and/or distribution of widespread species
- D5 Conservation status of our native species
- D6 Relative abundance and distribution of priority species in England
- D7 Species supporting ecosystem functions

Defra does not attempt to map indicators to specific actions. For the purposes of the catalogue indicators have been mapped to actions based on expert judgement where assumptions have been made that the actions could result in a change in these indicators.

In addition to those cited in the EIP23 we linked to additional indicators in the OIF and others used by the OEP, including:

- Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Condition of Marine Protected Areas
- Abundance of priority species
- Threat of extinction to UK species
- Extent of land-use change
- Area of woodland in England that is sustainably managed

These indicators have also been mapped onto actions using expert judgement where assumptions are made that the delivery of the action could result in a change in the indicator.

⁹ [Outcome Indicator Framework for the 25 Year Environment Plan \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://www.defra.gov.uk/outcome-indicator-framework)

2.1.14 Monitoring and evaluation

Any information that was publicly available or known about the monitoring and evaluation plans for each action was captured. For most actions this information was difficult to find. However, we are aware the Cabinet Office-HM Treasury Evaluation Task Force is currently developing a cross government evaluation registry that may make this task easier in future.

2.1.15 Linkages between actions

Where possible the ICF team noted potential links or relationships between actions. For example, the Sustainable Farming Incentive links to both Countryside Stewardship and Landscape Recovery as both actions are part of the Environmental Land Management schemes. This was based either on information included in the EIP, other publicly available information or prior knowledge.

2.1.16 Actions of Interest

The EIP contains a large number of actions but it lacks detail on their relative importance. As it is not possible or desirable for the OEP to monitor and report on all the actions, an assessment of the significance of different actions is therefore valuable. This will enable the OEP to direct its resources more effectively and provide scrutiny to actions likely to make the greatest contribution to government's TPW goal. As part of this project, the OEP asked for a list of priority actions to be identified. Potential criteria to assess action priority were discussed with the OEP.

- Scale of the action
- Anticipated impact of the action
- Directness of the action's influence
- Importance for leveraging system change
- Government's and stakeholders' perceptions of its importance
- Dependency on/from other actions

On completion of the catalogue, it was evident that were information gaps for most of the criteria. A systematic approach to qualifying the importance of an action based on these criteria was not possible. Furthermore, without a detailed causal map that highlights the interdependencies of actions and their specific contribution to different delivery themes and each of the targets, it was not possible to make even an expert judgement on which actions are of 'priority' or 'most important' for delivering 'TPW'. Achieving this will require detailed causal mapping of the actions and themes against each other and against the targets.

'Actions of interest' were therefore identified in discussion with the OEP with reference to multiple criteria and based on an expert judgement. These included:

- The allocation of resources or funding to the action
- Scale of action
- Expert judgement on the importance of the action for contributing to the targets
- Any published documentation explicitly stating the contribution of the action to the legally binding targets.

The actions identified as 'actions of interest' are relatively large scale, highly resourced, or expected to make a large contribution to one of the targets.

2.1.17 References

Reference columns were added to the catalogue to allow researchers to input page numbers (relevant to the EIP) or links to external documents pertinent to the information included in the catalogue. This ensures transparency, supports quality assurance and enables other users of the catalogue to look up the information that it includes.

2.2 Catalogue population protocol

A protocol was developed for the ICF team to use to ensure systematic compilation of the catalogue. The key stages are summarised below:

- Government actions were identified by searching through delivery themes 1 to 6 of Chapter 1 of the EIP and at first by only using information provided within the EIP. Details of the actions were captured using the data extraction template created.
- Once details of the actions were captured, the catalogue was reviewed to ensure that content was fit for purpose. Any duplicate actions were removed.
- Where there were difficulties allocating actions to discrete categories, catalogue headings and the categories within them were discussed and reviewed internally.
- Evidence gaps were reviewed, and discussed with the OEP to consider how they would affect the development of delivery pathways.
- A second round of data extraction was undertaken to fill information gaps using publicly available information outside of the EIP. Filling information gaps for all headings for the 'actions of interest', as well as the following headings for all actions:
 - 'Title', 'Description', 'Type', 'Maturity', 'Environmental Biome', 'Environmental Pressure', 'EIP Goal', 'Delivery theme', 'Legally binding target', 'Additional target', and 'Delivery partners', was prioritised.
- After exhausting online publicly available information, evidence gaps were to be investigated through engagement with relevant stakeholders, particularly the relevant Defra teams. During the timeframe of this project, Defra were unable to engage.

2.3 Quality assurance of catalogue

After population, the catalogue was shared with other colleagues within ICF with expert knowledge or experience of the different policy areas and actions listed in the catalogue. The following quality assurance process was used:

- Information and instructions for quality assuring the catalogue were shared with a colleague external to the project team and the quality assurance process was piloted to ensure instructions were clear.

- The instructions were then shared with 10 colleagues in ICF who had significant experience in the policy areas. Colleagues were allocated to review actions within delivery themes to match their expertise and experience.
- Where colleagues had a knowledge of the particular action they reviewed the information included in the catalogue to check whether they agreed with any expert judgements made, and to provide any additional information.
- Colleagues added notes to the catalogue to provide extra information, or on occasion to disagree with any expert judgements made in the catalogue.
- Where there were disagreements with the judgements made in the catalogue these were discussed and reviewed between the project team and the quality assurer.
- Any information that was added to the catalogue required a reference to a publicly available document.

Not all actions within the catalogue could be quality assured by an ICF member external to the project team. Some actions within the catalogue are not sufficiently developed for those outside of Defra to have an adequate understanding or working knowledge of the action. Further quality assurance will therefore require engaging with those developing the actions.

2.4 Production of Graphics

Graphics produced as part of this project are intended for Parliament, Defra and its delivery partners, and environment sector stakeholders, to give information in an accessible format and to improve understanding and awareness of government activities that are ongoing to deliver on TPW.

The OEP shared with ICF several example graphics that had been produced by either the OEP or the Climate Chance Committee (CCC):

- The CCC pathway [March 2023 Progress in adapting to climate change 2023 Report to Parliament \(theccc.org.uk\)](#)
- The OEP Taking stock pathway [Taking stock protecting restoring and improving the environment in England.pdf](#)

These pathways were reviewed by ICF to understand what type of content was described and what further information would be needed in order to produce similar graphics as part of this project. Although these graphics provided structure to information and in some cases conveyed the logic for particular interventions at a programme level, the example graphics did not include causal pathways for individual policies.

After review of the examples, the ICF team produced draft graphics that organised information in a similar vein, structuring the information in the catalogue to provide an overview of actions contributing to the TPW goal. The draft graphic grouped the actions listed in the catalogue against delivery themes of the EIP, targets and action typologies. This draft graphic was presented to the OEP using an interactive whiteboard tool, Mural, so that the draft graphic could be discussed collaboratively and adjustments or additions could be made easily.

After review of the draft graphic, the OEP wanted to explore options for conveying other data that had been included in the catalogue over multiple graphics. ICF provided the OEP with a set of descriptive questions that could be explored through the production of the graphics based on the information available in the catalogue.

- What actions are happening under different themes of interest?
- When are actions happening?
- Who is delivering which actions?
- What targets and outcomes will different actions contribute to?
- What actions are happening by 'action type'?
- Which environmental pressures do each action contribute to addressing?
- What is the status of the planned actions?

Whilst not evaluative, answering these questions through information provided in the catalogue and visualised in graphics can support the OEP in their thinking about the agenda for future evaluation and analysis in its role of holding the government to account in this area.

The ICF team also outlined two key questions that the catalogue and graphics could not answer and the reasons why.

- **Scale of funding or scale of impact:** This could not be included in the graphic because a) information was not always available b) many small actions may have transformational impacts, despite relatively small amounts of funding c) scale of impact is not always defined unless it's a policy that has been through an appraisal process.
- **Interactions, dependencies and overlap:** Detailed causal pathway mapping was unfeasible in the time available and given incomplete evidence. To develop a casual map which would indicate which actions are a priority would require a detailed systems map developed with the relevant stakeholders, which describes the causal structure for what's needed both in terms of ecological change and the system enablers. This would then need to be compared to government planned actions to identify which actions are of priority.

The OEP prioritised the following data for the production of the graphics:

- Actions grouped in a way that shows who the key delivery partners
- Action typology through use of colour coding and a key
- A description of the action maturity
- A graphic displaying which targets actions are supporting

Several draft graphics that displayed the above information were then developed in close collaboration with the OEP in an iterative process. The graphics are set out in section 3 of this report with an accompanying high-level descriptive analysis of what they convey and observations about the actions that have emerged through the project. Graphics were then supplied to the OEP in an editable format so that adjustments could be made to their format to fit in with their reporting.

3 Visualisations of government actions on Thriving Plants & Wildlife

3.1 Graphic 1: Overview of EIP Chapter 1 TPW, Actions and Targets for England/UK

The 'Apex Goal' of the EIP is 'TPW. The main actions for the delivery of this goal are detailed in Chapter 1 of the EIP, which organises the actions into eight delivery themes, six of which focus on actions to support delivery in England. The EIP also details the targets that government have committed to achieving, which will support this apex goal.

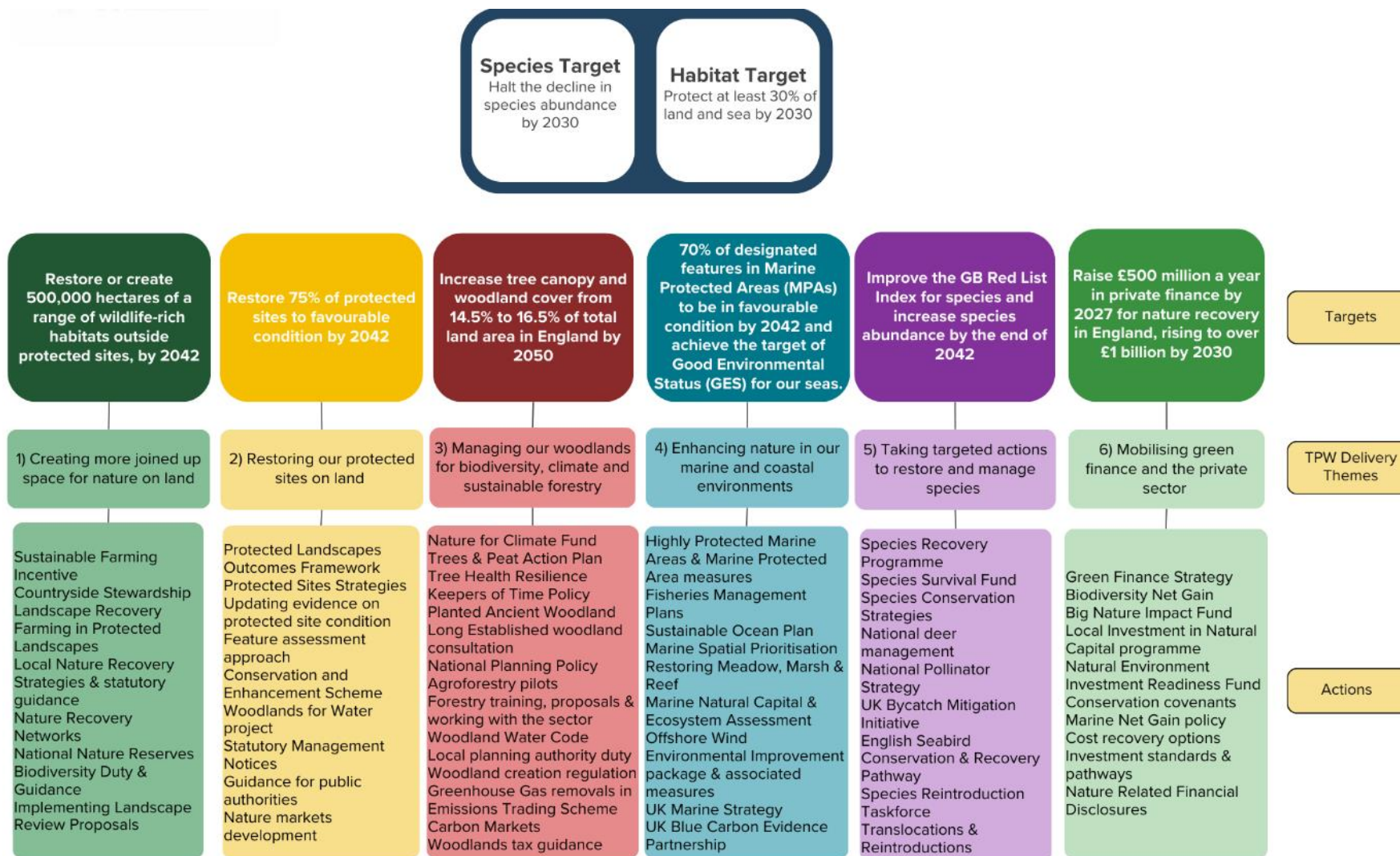
Figure 3.1 summarises and structures the actions listed within Chapter 1 of the EIP according to the delivery theme they are linked to (defined in the EIP). The diagram also indicates the target(s) that each delivery theme primarily contributes to (as identified through expert judgement).

It should be noted that actions under each delivery theme will make contributions across most of the targets. Also many of the actions described primarily under one specific delivery theme are likely to contribute to other delivery themes. However, to reduce complexity and provide an overview of the information the EIP contains, these additional links are not presented in the diagram.

The EIP does not consistently describe which actions contribute to which target and in most cases it does not attempt to explain or quantify the extent of any such contribution. The most detail on extent of contribution to target is provided for agricultural schemes (Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), Countryside Stewardship (CS), Landscape Recovery (LR), Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)), but even these figures are amalgamated across the ELM schemes.

Many of the actions described within the additional nine chapters of the EIP cover other environmental objectives, such as clean air and water, biosecurity, and net zero. These include a sizeable number of actions that are likely to contribute to the achievement of the apex goal of TPW. Indeed, this goal may be contingent upon some of these actions. These other actions are not listed in the catalogue nor are they represented in any of the diagrams.

Figure 3.1 Graphic 1: Overview of EIP Chapter 1 TPW, Actions and Targets for England/UK



3.2 Graphic 2: The EIP Delivery Partner Landscape

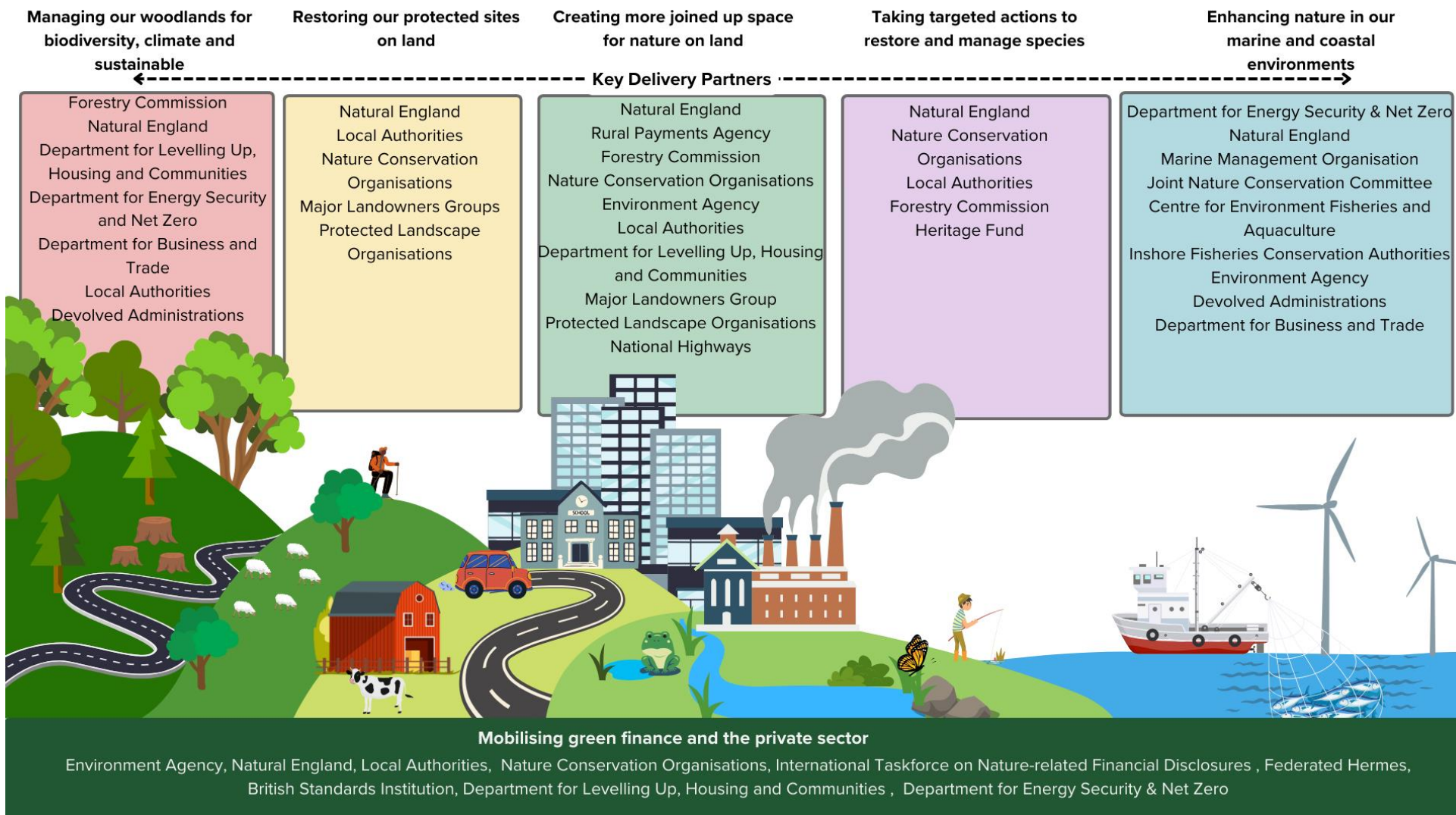
Defra is the responsible delivery stakeholder for most actions included in the EIP. Outside of Defra, there are various other government departments, arms-length bodies, agencies, and other public bodies who are crucial to the delivery of actions for supporting TPW.

The EIP states that the plan *“has been developed with support from experts in Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, and others across the country”* however within each delivery theme, there is little detail on the primary partners that are responsible for the delivery of specific actions. Within the chapter, few references are made to Natural England, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission and other non-departmental bodies such as Marine Management Organisation despite their crucial role.

The OEP needs to better understand the delivery landscape so that it can monitor and engage with delivery leads, acquire information on the status of delivery, and assess the adequacy of delivery in terms of what is to be delivered when, the resources allocated to achieve objectives, and the governance, monitoring and reporting structures in place. To create a more detailed picture of the roles key delivery partners play, additional publicly available information as well expert knowledge has been utilised.

Figure 3.3 indicates the partners identified as being involved in the delivery of actions within each delivery theme. It also illustrates pictorially the environmental biomes and pressures that the delivery themes intend to address. The cross-cutting nature of the “mobilising green finance and the private sector” delivery theme is recognised by its location across the bottom of the figure. Delivery partners have been defined as those that either have responsibility for the whole or part of an action or have key roles in supporting their delivery. The types of organisations listed within this category are described in section 2.1.11.

Figure 3.3 The Delivery Partner Landscape for TPW



Natural England is identified as covering the largest number of actions, having a role in at least 24 of the 71 actions identified. It covers more than double the number of actions when compared to the other organisations. This is based on the searches undertaken during the project period; however, it is likely further searches would reveal that Natural England has a role in even more actions. Natural England is particularly crucial to the delivery of the following actions:

- Improving condition of Protected Sites including SSSIs by updating evidence and through development of Protected Sites Strategies.
- Nature recovery by supporting Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and development of the national Nature Recovery Network
- Supporting species recovery through delivery of the Species Recovery Programme and Species Conservation Strategies
- Supporting nature friendly farming by providing strategic input, as well as on farm advice, for Environmental Land Management Schemes (SFI, CS, LR).

In addition to their key roles, Natural England supports other actions across all the six delivery themes. The full breadth of roles that Natural England play is outlined in their [Natural England action plan 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114112/natural-england-action-plan-2022-to-2023.pdf).

The delivery of TPW targets is contingent on the work and support of Natural England. The Natural England Annual Report and Accounts (2022 to 2023)¹⁰ highlight that having a fully capable workforce to deliver their objectives is key to success. Natural England identified 'people capability' as a corporate risk that has the potential to impact upon delivery of the 2022-23 Action, and therefore requires monitoring.

3.3 Graphic 3: Progress on TPW actions

The EIP provides some description of what different actions are aiming to achieve and any upcoming milestones in their delivery cycle. However, the EIP doesn't differentiate between actions to indicate their relative significance or centrality to delivery. It is therefore difficult to discern from reading the EIP which actions are of priority. While the EIP mentions upcoming milestones for some actions it does not provide an assessment of how developed actions are.

Figure 3.4 summarises and structures actions intended to deliver the government's TPW targets. It shows the type of action, the maturity of its development (explained below) and the main delivery theme it contributes to (as defined in the EIP).

By showing the actions in this way it is possible to gain an overview of the range of actions being developed for all delivery themes, and a sense of the progress being made. Summarising this amount of information into one diagram means decisions on what to include need to be made and detail is inevitably lost. The sources and process used to construct the diagram are described below and caveats on its use given.

Each action was placed within the diagram according to the progress that has been made with developing and delivering the action, in so far as this is discernible from the text in the EIP (as of October 2023). Those closest to the centre are still 'under

¹⁰ [natural-england-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-2023.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114112/natural-england-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-2023.pdf)

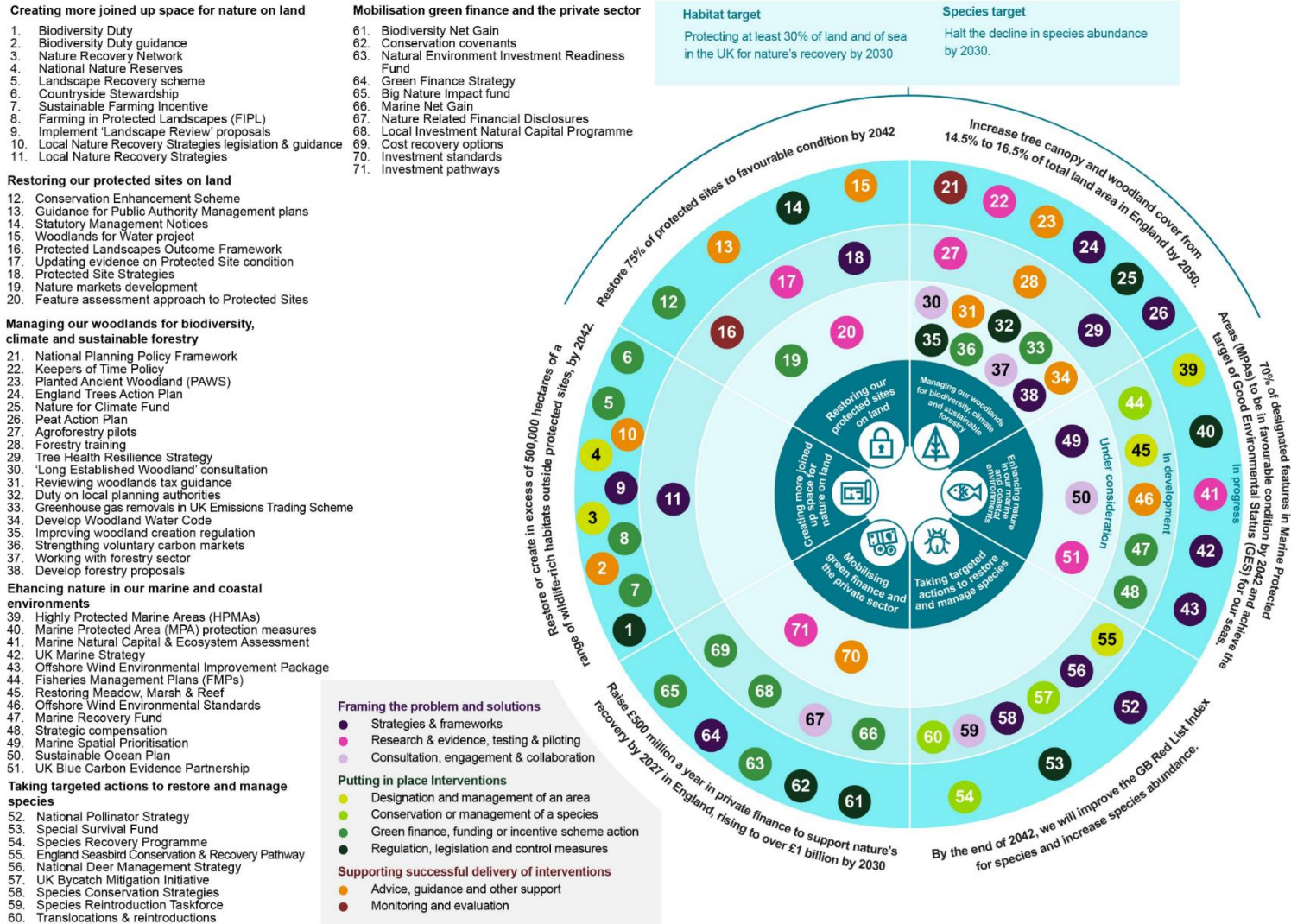
consideration', those 'in development' are in the middle, and those closest to edge are 'in progress':

- **Under consideration** – these are ideas government are exploring. There may be acknowledgement or awareness of a gap or a potential solution may have been identified, but no direct action has been 'agreed'
- **In development** – in this case some agreement for action has been achieved, and the solution or aspects of it are being clarified e.g., development of proposals, exploring options, scoping exercises.
- **In progress** - the action is underway with published information available.

The criteria for determining how 'mature' an action is are described in section 2.1.3. Our judgement about whether an action is 'under consideration', 'in development' or 'in progress' has been informed by both publicly available information and team knowledge.

It should be noted that the work to produce the diagram has not involved any evaluative judgements about the potential suitability or relevance of individual actions and targets, nor has the progress or effectiveness of actions been considered beyond the analysis outlined below.

Figure 3.2 Progress on TPW actions



3.3.2 Observations on the progress of actions

As indicated in the objectives, our task was not primarily analytical but to structure and organise material meaningfully so as to make it more accessible. However, we offer some analytical impressions from production of the diagrams about the progress of actions.

The delivery theme ‘creating space for nature’ appears to have the most actions the furthest along in their progress. Defra has placed emphasis on nature friendly farming actions, to deliver the environment targets. Collectively actions that pay farmers and land managers to take care of the environment, such as SFI, CS, LR and FiPL, are aiming to contribute:

- “at least 50% of the target of bringing protected sites into favourable condition by 2042.”
- “at least 80% of the target to restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected areas by 2042.”
- with the overall aim that “65 to 80% of landowners and farmers will adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10-15% of their land by 2030.”

However, it is notable that the actions intended to coordinate action at local levels and join these up at national levels (LNRS, and NRN respectively) are still in the early stages of development.

Similarly, progress has been made to protect and manage marine areas but there is little public information available about the underlying strategy of marine spatial prioritisation.

Progress has been made to protect and manage areas with the development and implementation of Marine Protected Area (MPA) conservation byelaws and the designation of Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs). There are currently nine marine conservation byelaws in force, with further proposals for byelaws having gone under consultation in March 2023¹¹. The first three HPMAs in English waters came into force on 5th July 2023. The three sites are Allonby Bay, North East of Farnes Deep, Dolphin Head covering an area of 986 km² in total¹².

However, there is limited information publicly available on the underlying strategy that prioritises marine space and addresses the concerns particularly from the fishing industry of ‘spatial squeeze’¹³. ‘Spatial squeeze’ refers to the potential loss of fishing ground due to competing pressures for marine space, in particular from offshore development and marine protected areas. The actions which would address this issue ‘marine spatial prioritisation’ and ‘sustainable ocean plan’ are still in early development.

Delivery theme 5 for targeted actions for species has two long standing actions that are in progress but will end within the next 3 years - the national pollinator strategy 2014 - 2024 and the species recovery programme 2006 – 2026, and the Species Survival Fund, a new, but ‘short-term programme’. Remaining actions are ‘in development’ and actions that may replace existing actions in the future, such as

¹¹ [Managing Fishing in Marine Protected Areas: Consultations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/managing-fishing-in-marine-protected-areas)

¹² www.gov.uk/government/publications/highly-protected-marine-areas/highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas

¹³ [The Frightening Outlook of Fisheries Displacement - Spatial Squeeze Report Published - NFFO](https://www.nffo.org.uk/publications/the-frightening-outlook-of-fisheries-displacement-spatial-squeeze-report)

species conservation strategies and the England seabird conservation and recovery pathway have little to no public information available. As halting species decline is a key action for 2030, more progress is needed on actions that aim to support species after legacy programmes finish.

3.4 Graphic 4: TPW actions of interest to the OEP

The initial ask as part of this project was to identify a list of ‘priority actions’ based on their contribution and importance in delivering TPW targets. Prioritising actions based on their importance for achieving environmental outcomes would require a ‘problem-based perspective’, working from a systems map iteratively to understand:

- What are the problems government intending to fix?
- What, in total, does government intend to do to fix the target problem(s)?
- Are the actions coherent with each other and do actions seem to be enough to solve the problem(s)? and then...
- What actions matter most to solving the problem(s)? Why?

Without a detailed causal map that highlights the interdependencies of actions and their specific contribution to different delivery themes and each of the targets it was not possible to make a judgement on which actions are of ‘priority’ or ‘most important’ for delivering ‘TPW’. Development of such a causal map would be extremely valuable but would likely require an extensive and comprehensive piece of work in collaboration with Defra, experts from across NGOs, delivery agents and academia.

Instead of identifying ‘priority’ actions, ‘actions of interest’ were identified which the OEP might wish to consider for further scrutiny and / or assessment (Figure 3.3) Actions of interest were identified based on review of the EIP and other public information as well as our internal team’s expert judgement as the considerable evidence gaps in the catalogue prevented a more systematic approach. More detail is described in section 2.1.16 Actions of Interest.

The list shown in Figure 3.3 is inevitably only a starting point for discussion – there will be many factors for the OEP to consider in prioritising actions for focused evaluative attention and scrutiny and these may change over time. Examples of criteria could include:

- Actions that are taking too long to progress from to ‘under consideration’ to ‘in development’.
- Policy areas that seem to lack strategic underpinnings or other areas where there are ‘gaps’.
- Actions that might be overlooked because they are indirect and small but could be essential to realising the benefits of more ‘direct’ policies.
- Well-funded actions that are believed to have important effects either on drivers or pressures.
- Potentially riskier actions such as those that have an uncertain evidence base, are ‘innovative’, or are addressing extremely intractable challenges, or are likely to be difficult to deliver.

Figure 3.3 TPW actions of interest to the OEP

Creating more joined up space for nature on land

1. Biodiversity Duty
3. Nature Recovery Network
4. National Nature Reserves
5. Landscape Recovery scheme
6. Countryside Stewardship
7. Sustainable Farming Incentive
8. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL)
11. Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Restoring our protected sites on land

16. Protected Landscapes Outcome Framework
17. Updating evidence on Protected Site condition
18. Protected Site Strategies

Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry

24. England Trees Action Plan
25. Nature for Climate Fund
26. Peat Action Plan
29. Tree Health Resilience Strategy

Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environments

39. Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)
40. Marine Protected Area (MPA) protection measures
41. Marine Natural Capital & Ecosystem Assessment
42. UK Marine Strategy
43. Offshore Wind Environmental Improvement Package
44. Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)
45. Restoring Meadow, Marsh & Reef
49. Marine Spatial Prioritisation

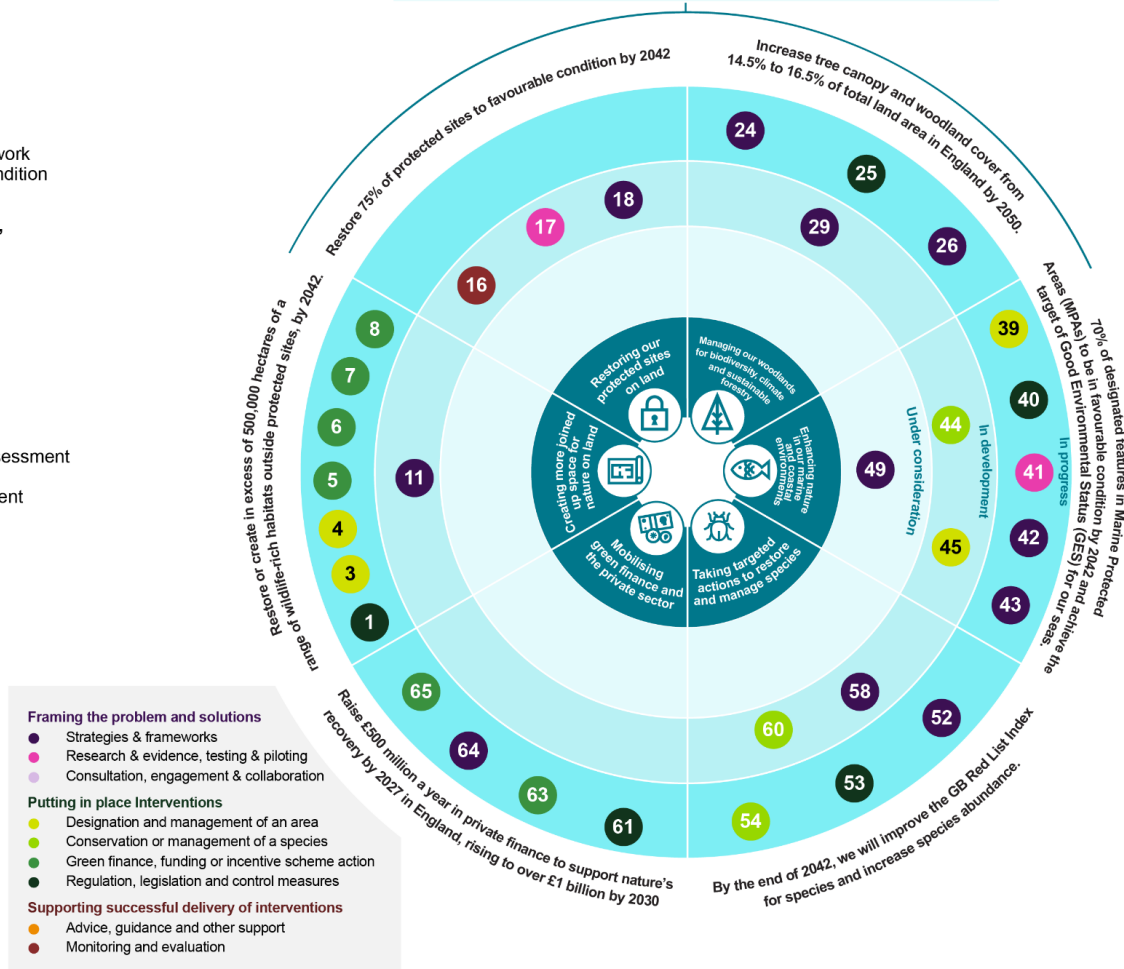
Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species

52. National Pollinator Strategy
53. Special Survival Fund
54. Species Recovery Programme
58. Species Conservation Strategies
60. Translocations & reintroductions

Mobilisation green finance and the private sector

61. Biodiversity Net Gain
63. Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund
64. Green Finance Strategy
65. Big Nature Impact fund

Habitat target	Species target
Protecting at least 30% of land and of sea in the UK for nature's recovery by 2030	Halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.



The below section provides a description of the actions of interest for each of the delivery themes:

1) **Creating more joined up space for nature on land.**

The EIP identifies farming schemes – SFI, CS, LR and FiPL– as collectively contributing to at least 80% of the target to restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected areas by 2042. The agricultural schemes will also be the main funding mechanism for increasing woodland cover after the closure of the Nature for Climate Fund in 2025.

The **Nature Recovery Network (NRN)** and associated projects have been identified as important for delivering multiple targets including restoring 75% of protected sites to favourable condition, restoring or creating more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat, recovering threatened and iconic animal and plant species and supporting increase in woodland cover. **National Nature Reserves (NNRs)** are a crucial component of the network as well as supporting SSSIs. Within Natural England’s Resilient Landscapes and Seas work area, the Nature Recovery Network and the NNRs have been allocated the most resource.

The **Biodiversity Duty** and the **Local Nature Recovery Strategies** are instruments that require the relevant responsible authorities to consider actions they would take to improve nature in their local area.

2) **Restoring our protected sites on land**

Updating evidence on protected site condition is an important action for understanding the required action to improve them, and is therefore a crucial action for the protected sites targets. Government aims to update the evidence on site condition and the required action to maintain or improve the condition of all 128 sites over the next 5 years (as of publication of the EIP in 2023).

The **Protected Sites Strategies** are important for working in partnership with stakeholders, such as the Major Landowners Group, to identify and put into action the necessary steps and support required to improve the condition of Protected Sites. As described in the EIP the **Protected Landscapes Outcomes Framework** is important for setting out expected improvements to protected sites in National Parks and AONBs and in providing improved management plan guidance.

3) **Managing our woodlands for biodiversity, climate and sustainable forestry**

The **England Trees Action Plan** is the key policy for delivering tree planting and delivering the tree canopy cover target. The **England Peat Action Plan** sits alongside the Tree Action Plan to also contribute to restoring 500,000 hectares of habitat. Both action plans are currently funded by the **Nature for Climate Fund**.

The Tree Health Resilience Strategy also sits alongside the England Tree Action Plan, supporting woodland management through preventing pest and disease threats to tree populations.

4) **Enhancing nature in our marine and coastal environment**

The designation of **Highly Protected Marine Areas**, and the improved conservation measures of **Marine Protected Areas** are intended to alleviate pressures on the marine environment to support their recovery. In the EIP, Defra identify that putting

improved management measures in place by 2024 will support 48% of designated features to be in favourable condition by 2028, contributing significantly to achieving the 70% under favourable condition target by 2042 target.

Fisheries Management Plans are the newly introduced mechanism for managing fishing stocks to maintain sustainable fisheries as well as contributing to wider environmental goals. The Fisheries Act 2020¹⁴ requires UK fisheries policy authorities which include Defra and Devolved administrations to publish FMPs, of which the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS)¹⁵ a total of 43 proposed FMPs.

The **Offshore Wind Environmental Improvement Package** includes a suite of measures to protect, restore or compensate marine features from potential damage caused from the development of offshore wind, helping to achieve net zero targets as well as work towards environmental goals. The package includes measures outlined in the EIP such as the marine recovery fund, strategic compensation, and environmental standards which in particular will help to avoid potential damage from offshore development to marine areas.

In the EIP, Defra have indicated they will lead on a practical initiative to restore estuarine and coastal habitats as part of the **Restoring Meadow, Marsh and Reef** programme. This initiative aims at restoring 15% of coastal priority habitats and therefore crucial for the 500,000 hectares habitat target.

The **Marine Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment** programme is a large research and evidence exercise. It intends to establish better evidence on the state of marine environment and use it to inform decision-making on marine issues. It will be used to inform the **Marine Spatial Prioritisation** programme. **Marine Spatial Prioritisation** will be important for balancing protection of the marine environment with the needs for other industries, such as fishing and offshore renewables.

5) Taking targeted actions to restore and manage species

The **Species Recovery Programme 2006 – 2026** is making an important contribution to the target of halting species decline. The programme, alongside the Back from the Brink programme, has improved the conservation status of 96 priority species and during 2022-23 is targeting 215 species across 93 projects.

National Pollinator Strategy is a 2021 to 2024 action plan to protect and conserve pollinators.

Species Conservation Strategies are aimed at providing better ways to protect species at risk and improve their conservation status. Species conservation strategies need to be considered by local authorities as part of the Biodiversity Duty. Despite the potential role this action could play in supporting attainment of species related targets, there was little public information available on this action.

Translocations & reintroductions help to improve biodiversity by providing opportunities for native species to be either relocated or reintroduced into areas.

The **Species Survival Fund** is targeted at protecting rare species such as red squirrels and grey seals. A total funding of £25 million has been allocated to this fund.

¹⁴ [Fisheries Act 2020 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

¹⁵ [Joint Fisheries Statement JFS 2022 Final.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

6) Mobilising green finance and the private sector

The **Green Finance Strategy** sets out how government intends to leverage private finance and achieve the target of £500 million of private finance raised per year. Funds raised should support delivery against the TPW goals.

Biodiversity Net Gain is a mandatory measure for new developments in England. It aims to ensure that development has a measurably positive impact on biodiversity, compared to what was present before the development, helping to contribute to the restoring and creating habitat target.

The **Big Nature Impact Fund** is a new public-private fund that aims to unlock private investment for nature-based projects and therefore contributes to the £500 million / year private finance goal. The UK government has committed £30 million of seed finance to the fund. Similarly, the **Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund** aims to unlock private investment to develop nature-based projects. The UK government has supported this fund through the provision of a total of £10 million through project grants of up to £100,000.

4 Conclusions

This project aimed to enhance OEPs ability to review and assess government action for nature. Key to this has been reviewing, extracting and structuring information about actions the UK government have committed to taking in the delivery of the Thriving Plants and Wildlife (TPW) goal and making them readily available and accessible in a searchable database (or catalogue). A further step has been the production of a number of diagrammatic products that can be used by the OEP to understand the progress of policy development and implementation and the distribution of responsibility for delivery. Together these products are intended to support OEP's scrutiny of government's progress and delivery.

The **catalogue** developed for Objective 1 of this project assimilates information in the EIP and other publicly available information in one place. Several frameworks were developed to group and organise actions such as the action typology and maturity framework, which can be utilised in further work. The EIP contains a large number of actions, and the catalogue brings this information together in a consistent format and allows searching and filtering of this information in an accessible way. This enables the OEP to gain an overview of relevant government actions and commitments. This should provide firm foundations for OEPs efforts to hold government to account for example through monitoring progress of actions. The catalogue should be updated and built on over time to include changes in delivery status, changes in plans and the addition of new actions as they are agreed.

Objective 2 was to produce **delivery pathways** that explain how these actions are intended to achieve the TPW targets and commitments and presents them in a visual form. Analysis of the catalogue showed that addressing this objective as specified would not be possible as the EIP does not provide the right kind of information that would be required for 'causal mapping' and there was insufficient time, resources nor access to stakeholders that would be required to generate a reliable causal mapping exercise using participatory methods. The causal mapping of policies / actions remains a critically important activity for Defra and OEP – since this is a key step in the process of determining the suitability of the portfolio of actions to address the TPW goal.

Instead, four '**visualisations**' were developed to provide an overview of government actions and organise, and structure data collected in the catalogue into single page graphics. These graphics help to summarise and communicate information obtained in the catalogue in an accessible and engaging format for public reporting by the OEP. The catalogue and graphics are complemented by the **interactive dashboard** (Objective 3) which can be web hosted by OEP. The dashboard can be used by OEP staff to undertake analytical queries and develop different representations of government action, and it could be made publicly available enabling stakeholders to easily filter, sort and search for information included in the catalogue on government actions for TPW.

As noted above, there is still a need for further clarity on how the many component parts of the policy system in this area fit together. This will provide reassurance that they are the right actions, and that they are in theory, capable of achieving the TPW goal, subject to the right levels of resourcing and adequate capacity and capability of delivery partners. Clarity on how the actions fit together to deliver TPW and evidence of whether they are working is needed to allow OEP to direct and focus its scrutiny activity. As noted above in section 2.1.16 the information currently available publicly is insufficient to inform proper scrutiny of the adequacy of Government's actions.

However, to causally map activities to each other (interdependences) and the relationships between actions and goals, outcomes and targets will require a) as much detailed information about these relationships as possible from published documentation b) some consistent access to a panel of experts with deep knowledge of the ecological, political and social systems that pertain to the apex goal of TPW, and c) a number of months with a clear focus on this as the main product . The outputs of this project and insights generated during their production can help support future work in this area and can act as a starting point and source of evidence to build on for developing a casual map of the actions with the relevant stakeholders. An outline methodology for taking forward this causal mapping has been shared with OEP separately.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 Action Maturity Framework

	Indicators of the status of development or delivery							
Action Category	Under consideration	In development			In Progress			
1. Overarching strategies and frameworks*	Proposes that a strategy will be developed e.g. manifesto commitment	Team assigned to develop strategy	Ministerial commitment to developing the strategy	Draft strategy published	Policies and programmes / actions that are needed to deliver strategy are agreed	Funding agreed and allocated to strategy, actions or otherwise committed. Reflected in departmental annual business planning, Spending Reviews allocations	Delivery of programmes is underway	Strategy objectives and outcomes being achieved,
2. Testing & piloting	Proposal to test and pilot	Development of options for piloting and testing	Agreement on pilot and testing programme	Funding committed/roll out agreed	Delivery agency agreed and work underway	Sites selected,	Delivery of pilot underway increasing scale and coverage	Review and learning
3. Research & evidence gathering	Acknowledge of need - e.g. gaps in knowledge	Reviewing existing R&E, clarity on gaps and needs to be addressed	Research/evidence plan/strategy and approach to conducting research/gathering evidence	Funding committed/ research call/ commissioning	Research and evidence projects started/ contracts awarded	Engagement with users on needs/approaches Interim findings	Final findings projects and programmatic findings	R&E Dissemination/ utilisation/ uptake

4. Consultation & engagement /partnership working collaboration	Idea of Consultation & engagement /partnership working collaboration has been suggested	Arrangements and considerations for the purposes and mechanisms by which consultation, collaboration and / or partnership might be undertaken have been scoped and clarified	Initial tools and systems underpinning future consultation, collaboration and / or partnership have been agreed		Consultation, collaboration and / or partnership is underway			
5. Protecting or restoring nature through mobilising funds OR incentivising through payment schemes	Proposes that a programme or fund will be developed e.g. manifesto commitment	Team assigned to develop programme	Ministerial commitment to developing programme	Draft guidance or materials published / consulted on	Stakeholders clear of role and signed up	Funding is agreed and allocated to strategy actions or otherwise committed - reflected in departmental annual business planning, Spending Reviews allocations	Delivery of programmes is underway	Strategy objectives and outcomes being achieved,
6. Providing (non-monetary) support (e.g. advice or assistance through personnel/liaison officers) including providing OR	Awareness/ acknowledgement of need/desire to act	Development of options	Consultation and agreement on proposals	Funding and resources allocated to development of advice and support mechs/release/roll out initial versions	Public available support/guidance, i.e. available for use by intended target	Evidence of (increasing) uptake of support	Evidence of impact from support	Review and update of support mechs

updating guidance								
7. Designation AND/OR Management of an area BS	Awareness/ acknowledgement of need/desire to act	Development of options and impact appraisals	Progressing of primary and secondary legislation as required	Implementation planning and resourcing once legislation approved	Possible designated/ managed areas identified/shortlisted	Sites officially designated/managed	Management plans developed and implemented/enforcement agencies defined and actively enforcing	Evidence of objectives being met and evaluation, learning and feedback to action re-design
8. Regulation / Legislation / Control / Enforcement (legal requirement)	Indication will develop formal regulatory mechanism	Development of options and impact appraisals	Progressing of primary and secondary legislation as required	Implementation planning and resourcing once legislation approved	Advance notice and public comms of regulatory changes, support measures (for transition period if required)	Changes take effect	Enforcement of regulatory approaches	Evidence of objectives being met and evaluation, learning and feedback to action re-design
9. Monitoring & evaluation (of policies, strategies, frameworks)	Indication that M&E will be undertaken / planned	Scoping of evaluation has been undertaken. specification for the evaluation is clear	Monitoring requirements and systems have been put in place. budget for evaluation agreed	Commissioning of evaluation is underway	Evaluator appointed and delivery is starting	Data collection and analysis is being undertaken	Findings are being fed into learning and adaptation and other uses	
10. Conservation and management of species	Awareness/ acknowledgement of need, e.g. known at risk species, and commitment to develop species plan	Development of options, identification of places to act	Consultation and agreement on proposals - general principles and place/species specific	Funding, resources, and coordination plans	Roll out of plans	Increasing coverage - species and areas	Evidence of conservation/ management objectives being met	Evidence of objectives being met and evaluation, learning and feedback to action re-design

