



United Nations Global Compact: RSPB Communication on Engagement 2024

This report outlines the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' activities engaging with the United Nations Global Compact between the period of April 2022 and April 2024.

Part 2: Description of the practical actions RSPB has taken to support the UNGC principles and engagement with the initiative

The UNGC principles have been incorporated into the RSPB Ethical Principles, which are also based on the National Council for Voluntary Organisations' (NCVO) ethical principles for the charity sector:

- Beneficiaries first
- Environment
- Integrity
- Openness and accountability
- Right to be safe

Our Codes of Conduct for Staff, Volunteers and Trustees, together with key policies and training provision, provide guidance on the standards expected across several key areas including, but not limited to: safeguarding, whistleblowing, anti-bribery and fraud, conflicts of interests, gifts and hospitality and RSPB Values and Values-led behaviours. All RSPB staff, volunteers and Trustees are responsible for knowing and adhering to the standards set out in the RSPB Codes of Conduct, policies and values. We also have a Modern Slavery Statement and have recently produced a Fair Work First policy.

Our Annual Report contains full details of our work and its impact: [Annual Report 2022-23](#)

Highlighted below are some specific examples under the headings of recommended activities for non-business signatories to the Compact. Suggested Activities for NGOs:

1. Propose and implement partnerships on corporate sustainability and engage with other stakeholders

- **Wild Isles (with WWF & National Trust (NT))**

In March 2023, more than three years of hard work culminated in the premiere of *Wild Isles* – the stunning BBC natural history TV series we co-produced with Silverback Films, alongside WWF and the Open University. Presented by Sir David Attenborough, it showcased UK wildlife like never before.

The RSPB was involved in Wild Isles from its inception, helping to finance the series alongside WWF, the Open University and the BBC. Over the following years we supported its production every step of the way, from filming, to scientific advice, to publicity and finally using the series to inspire action for nature at scale.

Our strategy was simple – work with our partners, including the BBC, to make the series as successful as possible. Then, use that success as a jumping off point to drive the change we need through the Save Our Wild Isles campaign, for which the National Trust joined us as partners alongside WWF.

The TV series, with our support, was a huge success. 10million+ viewers tuned in to watch *Wild Isles*. It was among the most watched factual series on UK television in recent years. Media and social media were abuzz both in the lead up and during the transmission of the



series, with discussions about the species and places filmed, and the work being done to save them for future generations.

The reason for our investment was not just to create a wonderful spectacle, but to drive the change our natural world so badly needs. In joining together with WWF and the National Trust we created:

- *Saving Our Wild Isles* – an additional documentary voiced by Sir David, shown exclusively on BBC iPlayer. From nature-friendly farmers to communities taking action in their neighbourhoods, it showcases inspiring and hopeful conservation work, which we must urgently scale up if we are to turn the nature crisis around. It has become one of the most watched factual shows on iPlayer.
- Four films aimed at a business audience. Featuring the likes of Deborah Meaden and the CEOs of Tesco, Barratt Developments, NatWest and others, they showcase the changes needed to integrate nature into business decision making. These films will be touring the boardrooms of major UK businesses over the coming years. 250 business leaders attended our *Save Our Wild Isles* business launch event and c. 3 screenings a week have been hosted since the launch. 100+ screenings have been completed to date with 27 further screenings in the pipeline. 24,000 employees from various businesses have attended the completed screenings. 302 screening requests have been received from business in the first 6 months since the launch.
- RSPB has also shared the Wild Isles business films at several conferences including Blue Earth Summit, Business Green Net Zero, Groundswell, Coastal Futures Forum, Oxford Farming Conference and the Welsh Royal Highland Show. We've also won the TVE Global Film Award for one of the films, 'Hungry for Change', and are finalists in the Smiley Film Awards for Catch-22 and Business for Nature, and are finalists in the EDIE green awards;
- A £1 million community fund inspired by the TV series, delivered alongside WWF and Aviva, giving community groups the crucial funding boost needed to take action for nature and play their part in saving our wild isles. To find out more about the campaign, including the £1 million Aviva Save Our Wild Isles Community Fund, visit saveourwildisles.org.uk.
- **People's Plan for Nature (with WWF & NT)**
The People's Plan was developed through a fully independent, impartial and inclusive engagement process, split into two phases. The first phase, which began in autumn 2022, was a National Conversation: an open call to the public about why our nature is so special and what we can do to protect it, which received nearly 30,000 responses from the public. This fed into the second phase, when 103 people from all walks of life were randomly recruited to form the People's Assembly for Nature. This group met for four weekends over four months to hear from world-leading experts, review evidence and collaboratively create a plan for nature's recovery.



The People's Plan calls for no more harm to nature, supported by stronger enforcement of existing nature protection legislation across land and sea. It calls for clear targets to be set to increase biodiversity. It also calls for the creation of a permanent assembly on nature and has a specific call about ensuring our transition to a future where nature is protected and renewed is a fair one. To read the People's Plan, visit peoplesplanfornature.org.

- In 2014 we began generating income from the sale of certified carbon credits to protect Gola Rainforest National Park in Sierra Leone. Sales of these carbon credits have gone from strength to strength and now provide finance for other areas across Sierra Leone too. 400,000 tonnes of carbon emissions have been saved every year thanks to the Gola Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) project.
- **COP15**
Nature underpins all our lives and so for people to thrive, nature must thrive too. But across the globe, habitats and wildlife are being lost at an unprecedented rate, with more than a million species currently facing extinction. Yet it's not too late to turn things around, if countries come together to take action for nature. That's why, ahead of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) we launched the Urgent Conversation campaign, alongside more than 30 conservation charities, including the Woodland Trust and Wildlife Trusts. The campaign urged the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, to use this once-in-a-decade opportunity to champion a global deal to reverse the loss of biodiversity by 2030 and 35,000 people signed our petition in support. To raise awareness of the campaign we teamed up with renowned choreographer Sadeck Waff and a group of 80 students who performed a 'human murmuration'. At the time, Sadeck said: "Our world leaders should follow the example of birds, and these dancers at COP15, and co-operate to create something beautiful – a plan for the future of nature."

In the run-up to the conference, we also released our report *A world richer in nature*, which set out clear recommendations for how the UK Government and devolved administrations can translate global promises into a decade of positive action for nature. After intense negotiations at COP15, countries agreed a new global plan for nature – the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Whilst not perfect, the plan is a commitment to take urgent action to halt extinctions, recover populations, and protect and restore ecosystems by the end of the decade. It's a landmark moment. But we know from experience that governments often sign up to targets, make promises and then fall short on action. We cannot let that happen again and so over the coming years we will be working hard to hold the UK Government to account and ensure it follows through on its promises.

- Together with our partner, Hanson UK, we've passed the 20 year milestone in our 30-year project to transform a working quarry into a vast wetland nature reserve at Ouse Fen – so far, we've created new wetland habitat across an area the size of 418 football pitches.
- **Embedding inclusion at the RSPB**
We continue our journey to become a more inclusive and diverse organisation. We've recruited an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team to lead the EDI programme, embedding EDI into every part of the organisation, alongside our team of EDI staff champions.



We are collaborating with external organisations and signed up to the Wildlife and Countryside Link 'route map' towards greater ethnic diversity in the sector and the RACE Report. Through these collaborations we are committing ourselves to take collective action and share data to improve ethnic diversity across the conservation sector, whilst holding ourselves accountable.

Internally, we've recruited a Senior Race Equity Specialist to lead on our ambition to widen ethnic minority representation and inclusion. We're developing and embedding inclusive recruitment practices to increase representation including attracting more candidates from diverse backgrounds. All of our senior leaders are completing Inclusive leadership training, run by Full Colour (an Equality Diversity and Inclusion consultant). Our EDI programme is supporting the whole organisation to fully understand why EDI matters to our mission and the actions they can take. And we're working with people of colour-led groups to increase access to employment in nature conservation.

More broadly on EDI, we're improving accessibility on our reserves, including the information we provide. We recognise that everyone's connection and ability to access nature is different and we want to work collaboratively to remove barriers and reflect on our role in creating them.

These are important steps in the right direction, but we know there is still so much more we need to do. We are setting up a dedicated taskforce to help us move further and faster towards removing the barriers within our organisation that produce racial disparities. This is an approach that is being used to bring change in other organisations too. Reporting to the Executive Board, the taskforce will include people of colour including members of our Beyond Differences group (our race equity staff and volunteer network), and representatives from across the organisation.

2. Support UN Global Compact business participants as they implement and report on their sustainability efforts

- Making business nature positive - At the RSPB we've set ourselves up to succeed in driving the transition to a nature-positive economy by developing and strengthening the RSPB's Policy and Advocacy Teams and linking them into income generation through conservation investment. Following the Dasgupta Review we have been making the case for more public and private funding for nature, and the development of local nature-positive economies. In addition, we have responded to key initiatives such as the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures.
- Working with external partners, we have also developed the Nature Positive Business Pledge to help businesses to reduce their impact on nature. The path to a nature-positive economy means changing how we do business in all areas of society, from the finance and policy sectors, to individual consumers. Through our Landscape Recovery pilots we are working with partners to deliver large-scale habitat restoration, as well as a range of public benefits, including carbon sequestration.
- Our other business partnerships include working with Whitbread in England, Hafren Dyfrdwy in Wales, Beam Suntory in Scotland and Northern Ireland Water.



3. Engage with global & local GC Networks

- We have engaged with various networks at COP15
- We have continued throughout the past 2 years to attend a number of webinars, UN Global Compact working groups and Q&A surgeries and general meetings with other members such as the monthly UN Global Compact Network UK Members' Breakfast and the most recent UNGC UK Network webinar series on Collecting Scope 3 Data.
- In 2023, RSPB submitted for the first time a team which participated in the 2023 UNGC SDG Innovation Accelerator Programme with the UNGC UK Network.

4. Join and/or support issue platforms and workstreams

- RSPB colleagues have attended the UNGC: Collecting Scope 3 Data webinar series in February 2024
- Fair Work First: RSPB is committed to ensuring there are fair working practices in place and demonstrates its commitment to the Scottish Government's Fair Work First policy by confirmation of the following:
 - Appropriate channels for effective voice, such as trade union recognition – the Staff Association is recognised to perform this role for the RSPB. RSPB consults, and ensures effective communication and feedback with employees, via the Staff Association.
 - Investment in workforce development
 - No inappropriate use of zero hours contracts
 - Action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace
 - Payment of the real Living Wage
 - Offer flexible and family friendly working practices for all workers from day one of employment
 - Opposing the use of fire and rehire practices
- RSPB has established a Greening Programme Board to steer and support the delivery of the RSPB Greening programme, which will support the delivery of one of the RSPB Strategic Outcomes that: 'not only will the RSPB be a nature-positive organisation, we will progress towards delivering a net climate cooling impact, having both reduced our operational greenhouse gas emissions and enhanced net emissions removals and reductions through our land management activities' OR 'that we lead by example, continuing to reduce our environmental footprint and empowering others to do the same'.

Part 3: Measurement of Outcomes

- Increase in specific species in areas.
- Influences in changes in UK legislation following evidence-based reporting. The most recent example of this is the UK and Scottish Governments' decisions to close sandeel fisheries in the English waters of the North Sea and all Scottish waters respectively, which comes after more than 25 years of campaigning by the RSPB and others, which called out the practice as one of the contributors to seabird decline. Many seabirds, including Puffins, rely on sandeels to feed their chicks. But climate change and over-fishing have vastly depleted sandeel populations, having a devastating knock-on effect on seabirds. Last year, the UK Government ran a public consultation to close sandeel fishing in the English waters of the North Sea. The RSPB and tens of thousands of our supporters leapt into



action, with more than 33,000 people from across the UK adding their voice to our campaign and responding to the consultation. 8,000 RSPB supporters also took to social media to tell their MPs how they felt. The consultation found overwhelmingly in favour of a closure of sandeel fisheries with 95.5% in agreement.

The Scottish Government also ran a consultation proposing to end sandeel fishing across all Scottish waters. Together, with over 11,000 RSPB supporters, we responded in favour of ending industrial sandeel trawling in Scottish waters. The consultation reported almost unanimous support for the move, with 97% in favour across individuals and organisations.

- Wild Isles - more than 10million people tuned into Wild Isles; 250 business leaders attended our *Save Our Wild Isles business launch event*. C.3 screenings a week have been hosted since the launch; 100+ screenings have been completed so far and 27 further screenings are in the pipeline. 24,000 employees from various businesses have attended the completed screenings. 302 screening requests were received from business in the first 6 months since the launch.

RSPB has also shared its Wild Isles business films at several conferences including Blue Earth Summit, Business Green Net Zero, Groundswell, Coastal Futures Forum, Oxford Farming Conference and the Welsh Royal Highland Show. We've also won the TVE Global Film Award for Hungry for Change, and are finalists in the Smiley Film Awards for Catch-22 and Business for Nature, and are finalists in the EDIE green awards;

- COP 15: The human murmuration film for COP15 was viewed 190,000 times and generated media coverage with a reach of over 47 million – including featuring on Channel 4 News and in The Guardian. All this support and engagement was communicated to the Prime Minister and ensured the UK delegation went to COP15 knowing how much nature matters to people. [Join the urgent conversation murmuration for nature \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- In July 2022, we took on the stewardship of Glencripesdale nature reserve a 614-hectare site in the Western Highlands in Scotland, as part of a landscape-scale plan to protect, restore and connect Scotland's remaining rainforest habitat. Scotland's temperate rainforests aren't as well known as their tropical counterparts, but they're just as special and can support a huge range of wildlife, including Pied Flycatchers and rare lichens and mosses. However, much of Scotland's rainforest has been lost, and what remains is often fragmented and in poor condition, as a result of invasive non-native species, like Rhododendron, and overgrazing by deer. In the coming years, we will be working with the local community and landowners to eradicate Rhododendron and find opportunities to expand and connect rainforest habitat around the Morvern peninsula.
- In 2022 – for the first time in 20 years – no Tristan Albatross chicks were killed by invasive non-native mice on Gough Island in the South Atlantic. As a result, breeding success reached an incredible 75%, up from an average of 32%. Results were similarly impressive for Atlantic Petrels whose breeding success doubled to 62%, and for Grey Petrels which saw chick productivity rise from 30% to 75%.



These phenomenal results are down to a reduction in the number of mice following our eradication attempt in 2021. Although we weren't successful in completely removing mice from the island, this year has given us a glimpse of what a future without mice could look like for seabirds – and makes us even more determined to return to Gough and remove the mice forever.

- 540,000 people took part in the RSPB's citizen science project, the Big Garden Birdwatch, recording over 9 million birds.
- Total expenditure on charitable activities increased by £14.4million (13.5%) to £120.6 million:
 - Managing nature reserves expenditure at £49.4 million was £2.8 million higher than last year. We manage 222 nature reserves, covering 159,000 hectares and providing a home to over 18,700 species. This increase reflects an increase in major conservation expenditure.
 - Research, policy and advisory expenditure at £44.3 million was £6.8 million higher, showing additional project and operational expenditure both in the UK and internationally. This includes those already mentioned, as well as the Black-tailed Godwit LIFE and East Caicos Wilderness projects.
 - The work we undertake to educate and inspire support – whether through our members, volunteers, grant funders, partners or politicians – is designed to bring about a shared world where wildlife, wild places and people thrive. We increased spend in this area by £4.4 million to £22.8 million.
- Supporter care expenditure was £0.4 million higher than last year at £4.1 million.