2024 General Election Manifesto for Bugs





Invertebrates are the foundations of a healthy environment, helping to pollinate crops, recycle and break down nutrients improving our soils, and cleaning our waterways, helping to control pests, and providing food for other species. They are essential to ecosystem function and without healthy populations, it is impossible to halt nature's decline.

The next Government must:

- Recognise the rapid decline in insect abundance, demonstrated by the Bugs Matter monitoring scheme revealing a 64% reduction in UK flying insect numbers in just 18 years.
- Pledge to restore sustainable populations of all invertebrates.



Fully resourced delivery plans must be set out to meet binding targets to rapidly address climate change, end sewage pollution and protect 30% of the UK for nature. Political parties must also fulfil their promises to end peat use, increase access to nature, and restore the health of rivers.

As well as achieving existing targets and pledges, halting nature loss, and reversing invertebrate declines will require the actions and commitments listed below.



- 1. Reconnect our landscape by filling B-Lines with wildflower-rich stepping-stones.
- 2. Set light pollution reduction targets.
- 3. Strengthen bee-friendly pesticide regulation.
- 4. Dedicate new resources to save our most threatened species.
- 5. Improve planning for invertebrates.
- 6. Lead global action on nature-positive trade.
- 7. Stop the sale of banned toxins for domestic use.



Images: © Claire Pumfrey. 1. Andrena haemorrhoa. 2. Four-spotted Chaser (Libellula quadrimaculata). 3. Perennial Meadow. 4. Angle Shades (Phlogophora meticulosa).

Fill B-lines with wildflower-rich habitats



Over 97% of the UK's wildflower-rich grasslands have been lost since the 1930s leaving pollinators and other wildlife unable to move through the landscape. Climate change further exacerbates the need for species to move freely to respond to changing conditions. **B-lines should now be used by the Government to target wildflower habitat restoration and creation** through habitat restoration projects, agrienvironment schemes, Nature Recovery Networks, and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Set light pollution reduction targets



Light pollution continues to increase at an alarming rate with no effective controls to protect nature. The Government needs to **legally recognise light as an active environmental pollutant**, set binding targets and mainstream light pollution into relevant policy frameworks including planning and environmental impact assessments.

Strengthen bee-friendly pesticide regulation



The continued presence of ecologically damaging toxins in our environment seriously hampers efforts to halt biodiversity loss and restore nature. The next Government must **uphold the neonicotinoid ban** and commit to **reduce pesticide use and harm including by banning the sale of pesticides to unqualified users** – routine domestic use of pesticides provides no material benefit to society.

Parliament must **legislate for new pre-'approval' tests and processes** that will protect bees, pollinators, and other beneficial invertebrates from <u>all</u> the ingredients in proposed pesticides, while enabling public participation in environmental decision-making. **The loophole that allows the spraying of nesting bees with insecticides must be closed.**

Actions and Commitments to reverse Invertebrate

declines.







Improve planning for Invertebrates

The next Government should commit to a targeted review of protected sites for invertebrates with inadequate coverage and representation. Important Invertebrate Areas (IIAs) are the best places in Great Britain for our invertebrates. They support some of our rarest and most threatened species, vulnerable habitats, and unique assemblages of invertebrates. Important Invertebrate Areas must be formally recognised, to enable better decisions about protecting nature. The next government should take a merit-based approach to planning, where sites of high value for wildlife, whether brownfield or greenfield, are protected from development.



Lead global action on nature-positive trade

Current international trade protocols are inadequate for addressing challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss. The **protection of global biodiversity must be incorporated into every trade negotiation** to ensure they do not result in the exportation of environmental harm. Biosecurity action plans must be implemented without delay to prevent the establishment of invasive non-native species (INNS). The **importation of growing media should be banned**, reciprocating biosecurity measures elsewhere to close this pathway. The **INNS Inspectorate must be made permanent and fully resourced** to facilitate a more strategic approach to invasive species biosecurity and management.



Stop the sale of banned toxins for domestic use

English rivers are contaminated with neurotoxic pesticides, banned for use in agriculture, but commonly used domestically in veterinary flea treatments. Concentrations of fipronil and the neonicotinoid, imidacloprid far exceed accepted safe limits and are highly toxic to all insects and other aquatic invertebrates. The sale of **fipronil and imidacloprid as domestic pet flea treatments and ant pesticides should be banned** to prevent further environmental harm.

Increased monitoring of all veterinary medicines needs to be introduced and include substantive responses to environmental risk. A full investigation into the environmental risks posed by veterinary medicines and domestic chemical products needs to be undertaken. **Improved environmental risk assessments must be introduced** into the 'approval' process for these potentially very harmful substances, accounting for the impact of soil and freshwater biodiversity.