



**Renewing biodiversity through
a people-in-nature approach**

ExCASES Mission

The Future of Biodiversity Renewal: Aspirational Visions



**University
of Exeter**



National Trust



**Natural
Environment
Research Council**

Origin of the aspirational visions

Overview

In November 2024, 80 researchers, partners, and support staff from the RENEW community came together at the **RENEW Biodiversity Parliament 2024** to connect, reflect on progress, and explore the challenges and opportunities for biodiversity.

This event was designed in tandem with the [ExCASES 'Future of Biodiversity Renewal'](#) mission, which sought to **uncover the diversity of values, worldviews and understandings** which shape multistakeholder aspirations for 'biodiversity renewal'. The Parliament setting provided a series of **'provocateur' speakers to stimulate thinking and debate** across a range of relevant themes and convened a space for our deliberative mission workshops.

The final activity of the Parliament invited participants to create a series of **holistic, aspirational visions** for each of the five themes covered in our earlier discussions about biodiversity renewal. This document summarises the visions that were created for: decision-making, finance, equity and justice; relationships and relational values; land use, farming and food systems; resilient and functioning ecosystems; and conservation approaches.

From the themed visions, the conclusion distills **five common threads to move us forward**. These are: decision-making processes, evidence, interdisciplinarity, paradigm changes, and language and communication. These could act as **critical unifiers between stakeholders** from wide-ranging sectors, disciplines and backgrounds as we work together for biodiversity renewal.



Aspirations, challenges and opportunities

The visioning activity

To create the visions, participants worked in groups carrying out a **quick-fire, collaborative exercise** to see whether they could align around a collective set of goals and identify promising pathways for achieving them. They were also cognisant of possible stumbling blocks and barriers.

Each group explored the **aspirations, challenges and opportunities** of their self-selected theme. There was a **surprising degree of consensus**, albeit at the expense of granular detail. The remaining disagreement pertained mostly to socio-economic and political dimensions. This illustrates the significant differences in how we identify problems and solutions relating to biodiversity renewal across disciplines, sectors and worldviews.

The five visions were brought into our final plenary discussions, where we further reflected on them and **explored connectivity between the themes**.

Please note: the visions summarised below do not necessarily reflect a 'RENEW' position, since not all perspectives were represented.



Aspirations

Decision-makers actively **consider multiple stakeholder perspectives across scales** throughout decision-making processes.

Social and ecological accountability underpins decision-making across all sectors.

A balanced approach is taken to what/how data and evidence are accessed and used: natural science, economic data and 'expert' knowledge should be considered alongside social science, ecological evidence, and local knowledge.

Challenges

Decision-making structures and policy are shaped by existing and historical political, economic and legal systems. **How can we urgently disrupt this pattern** to ensure marginalised and unrepresented voices are brought to the fore?

How do we **integrate multiple perspectives and multi-scale dimensions** in an equitable and effective way – for people and nature?

Do we need **more regulation and enforcement** to push businesses to comply?

Opportunities

Using a dual approach to **leverage agency from the bottom-up** (e.g., volunteering, guardianship, direct action), alongside **ambitious, top-down, structural change** (e.g., need for regulation; a fair system for valuing and integrating Rights of Nature; equitable decision-making processes and outcomes; collective action spanning local to global levels to build coordinated and trusted partnerships for urgent change).

Taking a more **long-term approach** in decision-making and planning with funding horizons in mind.



Aspirations

Guardianship is reimagined and culturally ingrained: relational power is redistributed to include people who might previously have felt they were not entitled, or able, to have a relationship with nature.

People are supported and empowered to develop their own sense of what it means to be in **reciprocal, caring relationships** with the natural world.

Heart, emotion, and spirituality are known as important for nurturing meaningful connections with nature. This is reflected in our choice of language when referring to nature, since words have creative power.

Local connections to land are seen and nourished. People cultivate meaning through being of a place, not just *from* a place.

Challenges

Developing a caring relationship with the natural world requires time, which is not equally available due to **financial and material insecurity**.

Leveraging support from large organisations to **support flexible, local scale projects** that allow people to engage and contribute as and when they are able.

Opportunities

Connecting large scale policy initiatives and organisations with smaller scale, local projects.

Influencing the semantics of science communication. Given the importance of emotion for connecting people with the natural world, disciplines such as ecological science should be more accommodating of emotion and relationship in their **use of language** when writing, reporting, and disseminating.



Aspirations

The nutritious food we need is produced from land that is managed in a nature-friendly and low carbon way that **supports inclusive communities** to thrive and enables guardianship.

Findings and recommendations of the **National Food Strategy** are enacted.

An **agro-ecological extension service** has been established that provides advice and guidance to farmers and land managers.

Farmers and land managers are authentically involved in the ongoing **co-creation of solutions**.

Challenges

Re-balancing land use priorities within the farming sector and effectively challenging the power of organisations who lobby for the current status quo.

Navigating tensions when trying to align stakeholders around **a common biodiversity-focussed vision** for food and farming.

The broader considerations and consequences for different people when advocating a **dietary shift**.

Imbalances and fluctuating trends in the **global food system** and the effects of these on policy and priorities in the UK.

Opportunities

Making space for **resistance, challenge and emotion** in decision making processes.

Balancing **incentivisation and agency**, creating bespoke solutions using facilitatory processes.



Aspirations

Biodiversity targets are integrated to create **holistic, functioning ecosystems**.

Biodiversity has a **functional measure** and is valued appropriately.

The holistic function and resilience of ecosystems is **secured for the long term** and conservation continues to **triage species and habitats** that need short-term action.

The role of biodiversity in ecosystem functionality is **reinforced through policy** implementation, for example, the 25-year Environment Plan.

Challenges

A **necessary paradigm shift**: uncertainty about what ecosystem functionality looks like in a rapidly changing climate and the difficulty of communicating this to wider publics.

Building confidence in **embracing uncertainty** amongst conservation practitioners, policy-makers and publics.

Current legislative frameworks may not be able to accommodate a paradigm shift.

Opportunities

Developing **new metrics** to understand and measure the interactions and roles of biodiversity in functional resilience.

Empowerment and communication opportunities around the functional and foundational role of biodiversity in ecosystem resilience.



Aspirations

There is a **co-produced, clear, aspirational vision** for biodiversity renewal around which people with a diversity of views and values are aligning. **Evidence is being generated** to measure progress against this vision.

Different knowledges and approaches are integrated: processes enable **negotiated outcomes** and build in opportunities for **adaptation** in response to emerging evidence.

Pragmatic solutions are supported, e.g. settling for compromised win-wins if they overcome conflict and lead to progress, even if they are not the ideal outcome for any one party.

Challenges

Balancing a survival ecology/future-proofing approach with **the need to protect** particular species, habitats, livelihoods and cultural objectives.

Identifying the right metrics to measure progress, within a broad overarching vision that deliberately accommodates different approaches.

Opportunities

Harnessing the benefits of **plurality** in conservation approaches.

Mediating and resolving conservation conflicts (or making progress despite ongoing conflict) by unifying different stakeholders around an agreed overarching vision.



Conclusion: common threads

Weaving through the five visions, five threads could act as critical unifiers between stakeholders from wide-ranging sectors, disciplines and backgrounds as we work together for biodiversity renewal.

1

Decision-making processes: who is involved and how?

Priorities: negotiating outcomes that are perceived and accepted to be fair; integration and balancing of different knowledges.

2

Evidence: whose evidence and how is it created?

Priorities: understanding of where more evidence is needed, and what kind; appropriate selection of evidence-based approaches; and integrating evidence into action planning.

3

Interdisciplinarity: how do we work together effectively?

Priorities: enabling holistic problem solving and integrated solutions; navigating a plurality of values and approaches.

4

Paradigm changes: what are the tipping points for seismic shifts?

Priorities: ingraining compassion and guardianship; future-proofing ecosystems and embracing survival ecology; challenging power inequalities.

5

Language and communication: how can we utilise the power of words?

Priorities: enabling empathy through our use of language; redefining indigeneity and landscape aesthetics; communicating new paradigms.



ExCASES Mission

The Future of Biodiversity Renewal: Aspirational Visions

ExCASES is a 'solutions generator' designed to tackle issues facing biodiversity renewal that are not covered by RENEW's four core themes. It provides an agile, flexible mechanism to work collaboratively with partners, researchers, and organisations from diverse sectors on focused topics. This cross-cutting theme is run by an interdisciplinary team of researchers based at the National Trust and the University of Exeter.

Thank you to all the participants of the RENEW Biodiversity Parliament 2024 who worked together in groups to create these visions.

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