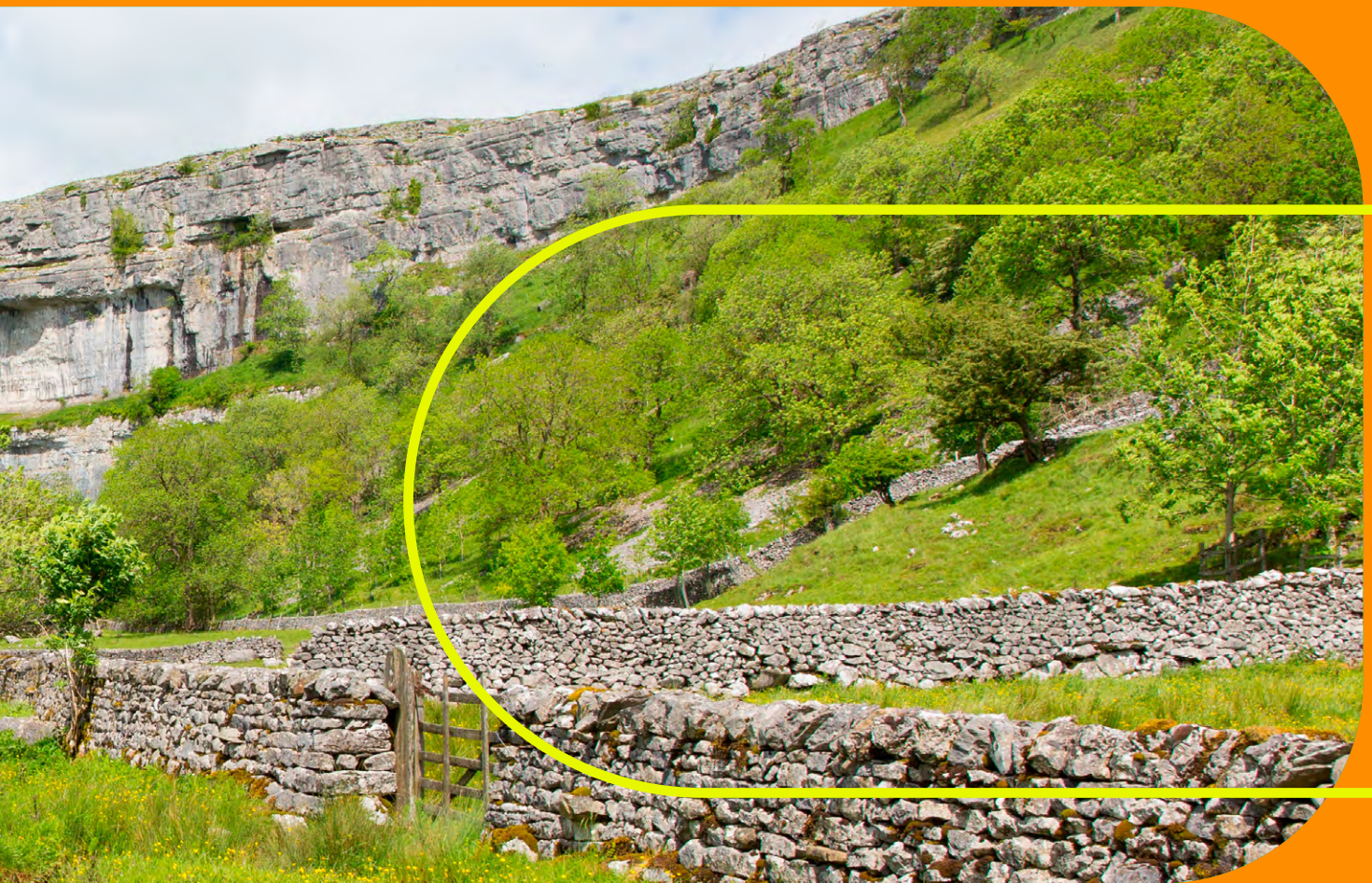


Land Use Framework for England

Consolidating commentary and
implications for professionals

April 2026



the-ies.org

The Institution
of Environmental
Sciences

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About the Institution of Environmental Sciences

The Institution of Environmental Sciences (the IES) is at the forefront of uniting the environmental sciences around a shared goal: to work with speed, vision and expertise to solve the world's most pressing environmental challenges, together.

As the global professional membership body for environmental scientists, we support a diverse network of professionals all over the world – and at every stage of their education and careers – to connect, develop, progress and inspire.

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Introduction

This is a briefing on the [Land Use Framework for England](#). It sets out the context of the Framework, details of its contents, and headline implications for environmental professionals.

It is intended to support IES members to understand how policy developments may affect their work, but may also be of interest to those seeking more information about the implications of environmental policy for the natural world and how land use can support England's approach to environmental challenges.

Ultimately, this subject is likely to affect any professional whose work interacts with land use, environmental effects of land use, or the wider promotion of sustainability and environmental governance in England.

If you want to support the work of the IES, you can [become an affiliate](#), or if you're a professional in the environmental sector working with science, consider [joining the IES](#).

“

“The IES supports the Government's ambition for a transformative approach to land use to deliver sustainable wellbeing and a country with thriving people, a healthy economy, and a flourishing environment.

The Land Use Framework will be a fundamental feature of such an approach, as long as it is set up to deliver and provides the right incentives to do so.”

[Institution of Environmental Sciences](#)

Response to the Government's Land Use Consultation

Recommendations: Making the most of the Land Use Framework

Delivering an effective Land Use Framework for England will require a joined-up approach across policy making.

This briefing outlines commentary from a number of organisations with their own perspectives on how the Framework could be delivered.

As a result, there are many implicit recommendations throughout the briefing, representing the view of the organisations concerned.

As a supplement, these summary recommendations provide further insights into how the overall approach of government could be coordinated to fully meet the promise of the Land Use Framework:

1. Take a holistic approach to the use of land across the UK to secure multiple benefits for communities and our natural world.
2. Reach a cross-governmental consensus on the use of land, supporting the Land Use Framework to coordinate – and manages trade-offs for – social, economic, and environmental objectives, and addressing the linked crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution.
3. Coordinate nature-based approaches to environmental improvement and climate mitigation to maximise the ‘ecosystem services’ provided.
4. Deliver a consistent approach to the objectives sought through Environmental Land Management Schemes, soil health, and the Land Use Framework, informed by scientific insights.
5. Commit to leaving UK nature and the wider environment in a better state than it was at the start of the 2020s, recognising that the current trend of environmental decline means that ‘do no harm’ is an insufficient approach to preventing long-term damage.

Read the message from the IES to the new Government for further recommendations and details on how each of the above recommendations could be delivered in practice: ‘[Our Shared Mission for Sustainable Wellbeing](#).’

For specific recommendations on the Government’s proposals for land use, read the [IES response to the Land Use Consultation](#), which was developed in collaboration with IES members and stakeholders, including the [Foundation for Water Research](#), environmental scientists, economists, students, and farmers.

Context: What is the Land Use Framework?

The **Land Use Framework** is an environmental policy intended to support multiple objectives for the use of land in England.

Originally due in 2023, it was eventually published in early 2026, with the scope and focus of the policy changing over time.

Calls for a Land Use Framework began in the late 2010s. One of the highest profile recommendations came from the independent **Dimbleby Review** into a National Food Strategy, which called for the creation of a Rural Land Use Framework “setting out which areas of land would be best suited to ... different functions” to “inform the payments and regulations that are being designed to incentivise farmers across England” based on three designations: semi-natural land, high-yield farmland, and lowyield farmland.


The review prompted the Government to adopt the recommendation, with proposals subsequently expanding to a much more ambitious framework setting out the Government’s approach to balance all objectives for land use, including agriculture, the environment, net zero, and climate adaptation.

While that commitment was made in the **2023 Environmental Improvement Plan** for England, the Land Use Framework was not published ahead of the 2024 General Election.

After the election, the Government published a **consultation on land use** in early 2025, with a view to informing the development of the final Land Use Framework.

This process of consultation was critical, as different approaches to the Framework could lead to substantially different outcomes for people, the rural economy, and the environment.

After a year of further work, the Framework was finally published in early 2026, setting out a vision for achieving multiple outcomes from land use in England, with additional elements speaking to implementation and how the Framework could influence decisions in practice.

An abstract graphic at the top of the page features a dark green line that starts at the top left, curves down and right, then left, then down and right again, ending in a large, rounded shape on the right side. The background consists of horizontal bands of light green and yellow, with a large yellow shape on the right side that overlaps the dark green line.

**“Our land is our greatest natural asset -
the source of food, the bedrock of nature,
the support system of the environment on
which we all rely.”**

Defra land use consultation, foreword

What does the Land Use Framework include?

The **Land Use Framework** sets out a framework-level approach to land use in England across three chapters, which broadly consider:

1. The Framework's goals;
2. The ways it can support better land use decisions; and
3. The ways it will be implemented.

Across those chapters, the substantive content of the Framework includes:

- **Seven visions** for specific functions of land use in 2030 and 2050, with a view to:
 - Housing;
 - Energy infrastructure and clean power;
 - Food production;
 - Nature recovery;
 - Resilient landscapes;
 - Landscapes for water; and
 - Communities.

- **Three insights** from the land use evidence base that inform the Framework's approach:
 1. 'There is enough land to deliver our objectives';
 2. 'Changes should play to the strengths of the land'; and
 3. 'Cross-sector opportunities are key to efficiency and growth'.
- **Four principles** to drive land use decisions:
 - 'Multifunctionality';
 - 'Right use for the right place';
 - 'Future-ready decisions'; and
 - 'Adaptive by design'.
- **Five actions** intended to drive the implementation of the framework:
 - Consistent spatial plans to join-up decisions on land use;
 - Support for multifunctional and efficient land use (including through funding for farming, alignment across

spatial priorities, and the diversification of land use finance);

- Better use of technology and data to inform land use decisions; and
- Sharing responsibility for the stewardship of land (with specific reference to mayors and local authorities, the government estate, major landowners, landscape partnerships, and local communities)

For the full details of what the Land Use Framework includes, see the [Government's response to the consultation](#), as well as the [Land Use Framework](#) itself.

Is the Framework sufficient?

When the Framework was initially published, the IES set out ten initial responses:

1. Positive outcomes from the Framework will rely significantly on how it is delivered in practice;
2. The Framework improved significantly following the 2025 Land Use Consultation;
3. Each of the visions in the Framework is positive, but they are not sufficiently connected to each other to drive multifunctionality;
4. While limited, the evidence base underpinning the Framework was used well to support the policy;
5. The Framework is effective in promoting and highlighting opportunities for cross-sector approaches;
6. Generally speaking, the principles are an effective step towards better decision

making, though they are not sufficiently empowered and they are limited by their scope and framing;

7. The implementation of the Framework will be well-supported by the proposal for a new Land Use Unit within Defra;
8. Commitments to coordinated action throughout the Framework are both welcome and necessary;
9. Leveraging data and evidence will be essential to driving outcomes through the Framework; and
10. The Framework is a first step and is a strong step in the right direction, yet policy on land use will need to continue to develop in coming years.

Find out more about the contents of the Land Use Framework and what it means for environmental professionals in our [full response](#), as well as our [gap analysis](#) on the Framework for [IES Members](#).

What's changed in the final Framework?

In the Government's [2024 election manifesto](#), it stated "food security is national security ... we will champion British farming whilst protecting the environment ... we will introduce a land-use framework and make environment land management schemes work for farmers and nature."

From that outset, the perspective of the Government in producing the Framework was clear, centring its primary objective on food security, with a secondary goal of finding shared benefits for nature.

Further details on the rationale behind the Framework can be taken from the land use consultation, which gave an indication of why the Government adopted a more minimalist approach to the reach of the Framework.

The consultation did not change that scope, but it did lead to an increase in the range of outcomes that the Framework is seeking.

Land use consultation 2025

Between January and April 2025, Defra held a [consultation on land use in England](#), with the goal of informing the development of a Land Use Framework.

The consultation document set out a vision for land use change, focusing on delivering a land use transition to:

- "Make space for nature recovery, water, and emissions reduction;
- Support sustainable and resilient food production;
- Deliver new infrastructure and housing;
- Fix the foundations for resilient long-term economic growth; and
- Co-create plans for delivery."

The consultation emphasised the inclusion of principles for government decision making on land use, descriptive analysis on levers for developing and adapting land use change, and a release of land use data to support spatial decision making.

it also included a subtly different set of principles from the set used in the final Land Use Framework:

1. "**Co-design:** Support for participation and leadership at the local and regional scale to develop and align spatial strategies and assess the fairness of changes in land use.

2. **Multifunctional land:** Enable multiple benefits on land, targeted according to opportunity, societal needs (such as the health benefits of co-locating new homes and nature), and environmental pressures (such as reducing pollution).
3. **Playing to the strengths of the land:** Support and spatially target land use change to locations where benefits are greater and trade-offs are lower. Give priority to land uses that are scarcer or spatially sensitive (for example grid capacity places restrictions on new renewable generation sites or protecting land that is best suited for food production).
4. **Decisions fit for the long-term:** Take a long-term view of changing land suitability, prioritising resilience (including to the impacts of climate change). This could include planning for new homes that are resilient to climate impacts, such as flooding and overheating.
5. **Responsive by design:** Land use policy, including spatial prioritisation and targeting, needs to be responsive to new data, opportunities and pressures.”

Reflecting on the comparison to the final Framework, the principles were consolidated down from five to four, largely at the expense of co-design, while the analytical principles were refined slightly.

One of the questions in the consultation was whether the principles should apply beyond government departments. This question is instrumental in determining the effectiveness of the Land Use Framework.

Ultimately, the final Framework did not reach significantly further than the

consultation draft in terms of other stakeholders that should use the principles for decision making. There has been a slight increase in their reach, yet most of the key decisions being made about land use beyond government are still formally outside their scope.

Scope of the Framework

Despite the limited scope of **how** the Framework is expected to work in practice, the forms of land use addressed are relatively broad.

The **consultation document** reiterated the commitment to multifunctional land use and a spatial approach, yet focused heavily on agricultural land use.

Subsequent sections of the consultation document covered:

- Incentivising changes for long-term food security;
- Increasing private investment in nature-based solutions and making space for nature;
- Bringing nature closer to communities and empowering communities to bring spaces into community ownership;
- Planning for climate resilient land use; and
- Several levers for land use change, including connecting plans, data, and knowledge sharing.

To that extent, many of the most important systems of land use were within scope, though it seemed unlikely that there would be significant effects beyond agriculture,

given the relatively limited proposals for how the Framework would have worked in practice.

These concerns were largely rectified in the final Land Use Framework, which specified a broader set of outcomes and identified a more cross-sector approach to pursuing multiple outcomes.

Despite this, the powers of the Framework are still relatively limited, so concerns remain about the extent to which land systems beyond agriculture will see a significant degree of change.

Broader policy considerations

The Government's manifesto placed a significant degree of emphasis on its plans to create **Great British Energy** and to work towards a cleaner UK energy system within the next few years.

Early in the Government's term, the Net Zero Secretary ended the **effective ban on onshore wind**, with no indication of any divergence from this trajectory during the current Parliament.

At the time of the consultation, there were still some questions about the role of energy production in the Land Use Framework. These concerns are now largely resolved, and it is unsurprising that energy is a prominent consideration in how the Government views the use of land, both in the Land Use Framework and in other policy developments like recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Another of the Government's manifesto commitments was to "get Britain building again". Although this was not specified as

one of the Government's 'missions', it was a significant focus of their campaign and planning reform has consistently been one of the biggest discussion areas of the first two years of the new Government.

Housebuilding and infrastructure development are likely to remain significant priorities for the Government when it comes to the use of land.

They weren't included in the original consultation, but unsurprisingly, housing is the first of the visions listed in the final Land Use Framework. It was already expected that the Framework would be developed in a way that does not interfere with the ability of developers to proactively resume the process of housebuilding and development.

Now that the final Framework has been published, that expectation has been confirmed, with the outcome of housing development being afforded primacy of place in the list of outcomes for the future.

Ultimately, the goal of the Framework is that this objective should not be contrary to the ability to secure environmental outcomes. In practice, that balance has been less successful, following a range of government policies that could potentially jeopardise biodiversity and nature.

It is not yet clear whether the Land Use Framework will be able to play a role in working towards an approach that is actually better at achieving this multiple outcomes together.

What could have been affected by the Framework?

Starting in 2024, the IES set out clear goals for what the Land Use Framework could achieve, based on the insights of our expert members.

We set five tests for a successful Framework, along with a series of potential social and environmental outcomes it could achieve.

Five tests for a strong Land Use Framework

Purely looking at the Land Use Framework from a functional perspective, we asked five questions in 2024, identifying the potential of the Framework, compared to other case studies like the [Scottish Land Use Strategy](#).

The five questions we set as tests for the Framework to answer were:

- **What:** decisions and guidance about land use in England, setting out an overall vision for how different benefits will be achieved, including through a multifunctional approach.
- **Where:** geospatial analysis of English land, its characteristics, and the different functions it could provide, with an overall indication of where different

vital ecosystems services will be secured across the country.

- **Who:** processes for decision making on the use of land at the local or regional scales, with reference to democratic engagement and capacity building to ensure a legitimate approach to land use policy.
- **Why:** strategic considerations that link specific decisions about the use of land to the Government's wider social and environmental objectives, with reference to framework-level governance and the ability to solve cross-departmental and cross-boundary challenges.
- **How:** delivery plans for enacting the Framework's vision and ensuring that local decisions reflect national objectives (and vice versa), with plans for implementation including specific policy instruments, guidance, and how skills will be put in place to support delivery.

In our [analysis on the Land Use Framework](#) and potential gaps in the policy, we set out a scorecard against these five tests:

- **What?** The Framework scored an A-, with clear visions and a multifunctional approach, albeit not a fully unified vision.
- **Where?** The Framework scored a C+, because it delivers on some of the geospatial analysis, but it lacks the strength to carry that analysis through to strategic decision making.
- **Who?** The Framework scored another C+, because it brings together many of the right decision makers, but doesn't have the power in practice to bring everyone to the table.
- **Why?** The Framework scored a tentative B, because whether this works in practice will depend on whether suggested connections actually manifest over the long-term.
- **How?** This is the biggest uncertainty for the Land Use Framework, so it scored a C- for now: the challenge is still delivery, and there are big questions about implementation that are yet to be answered.

Scoring on scope

One of the main concerns raised about the Land Use Framework at the time of the consultation was that it might not have sufficient scope to affect a wide range of environmental outcomes.

This was important, because depending on the exact scope and subject matter of the Land Use Framework, it has the potential for wide-reaching implications for a whole range of environmental issues.

At the time of the land use consultation, the IES identified six core issues likely to be

directly affected by the Framework:

- **Food production and farming**, with potential implications for food security, **Environmental Land Management**, and all other agricultural activities;
- **Conservation**, particularly for 'land sparing' objectives such as 30x30, the commitment that at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and coastal & marine areas will be effectively conserved and managed by 2030;
- **Local Nature Recovery Strategies** and other **local actions to address nature and biodiversity**, including through measures such as **Biodiversity Net Gain**;
- **Landscapes**: the role and scope of protected land, **SSSIs**, and **AONBs**;
- **Energy production and storage** and grid connectivity, including onshore wind, solar panels, and other forms of renewable energy generation; and
- **Carbon capture, utilisation, and storage**, as well as carbon sequestration (both naturally occurring sequestration and by direct intervention).

Given the interactions between these issues and other social and environmental systems, the IES also noted considerations which could be indirectly affected by the Land Use Framework:

- **Planning, particularly housebuilding** and infrastructure development, as well as the realisation of planning policy through the **National Planning Policy Framework**;
- **Sustainable development**, economic growth and security;

- **Climate** mitigation and resilience;
- **Water security and surface water flooding** (including the delivery of **Sustainable Drainage Systems**);
- **Nationally-significant infrastructure delivery**;
- **Transport**; and
- **Environmental improvement.**

Many of these issues were explicitly identified in the final version of the Land Use Framework.

Housing and infrastructure were elevated to an explicit priority, as were the community elements of sustainable development and landscape resilience.

Some elements of the nature objectives were not fully reflected at the vision-level in the Framework, yet nonetheless were implicitly covered by the scope of the actions listed in the plan.

Holistic environmental improvement remains outside the scope of the Land Use Framework, yet will still be influenced by whether or not the Framework delivers on its aspiration for multifunctional land use.

What did stakeholders ask from the Framework?

Before its publication, the Land Use Framework already saw considerable debate from the first commitment to produce it, with a range of perspectives on what should be included or how it should address land use challenges.

National Food Strategy & Government Food Strategy

The initial recommendation on land use from the independent [National Food Strategy](#) was to “Create a Rural Land Use Framework based on the three compartment model.”

The three compartment model refers to another approach in the report, combining ‘land sharing’ and ‘land sparing’ approaches to identify three types of land use for farmland: semi-natural land, high-yield farmland, and low-yield farmland. The approach advocates for a mixture of land uses, balancing the different needs and benefits of land more effectively.

In this proposed approach, the role of the Rural Land Use Framework would be to “[set] out which areas of land would be best suited to the different functions of the three compartment model”, informing

agricultural payment schemes and farming incentives. The report sets out a number of criteria for a successful Framework:

- It should inform payments and regulations;
- It should be clear and explicit about what the Government wants to achieve;
- It should be clear about which incentives and regulations will lead to which outcomes (specifying nature recovery, climate, and food security);
- It should include a National Rural Land Map, identifying which land would be best used for which purpose;
- It should connect and inform different incentive schemes and land-based strategies across DEFRA;
- It should be informed by input from other relevant departments (the departments named in the Strategy have since been superseded by others);
- The Government should publish an annual progress report on the Framework.

Naturally, this vision for a Land Use Framework is very different from what was eventually published. Most notably, it would have been a 'Rural' Land Use Framework with a heavy focus on agricultural land use.

While agriculture is still a significant focus of the Land Use Framework, the final document is more reflective of the holistic approach called for by other commentators.

Following the independent report, the [Government's Food Strategy](#) was published, including a commitment to "publish a land use framework in 2023 to ensure we meet our net zero and biodiversity targets, and help our farmers adapt to a changing climate, whilst continuing to produce high quality, affordable produce that supports a healthier diet."

The Strategy also included further details on what the Land Use Framework would include:

- It would reflect all Government objectives for English agriculture, the environment, and net zero;
- It would respond to (and reflect on) the outcomes of the then-ongoing House of Lords [inquiry into land use in England](#);
- It would inform incentives for agri-environment schemes;
- It would be a 'valuable resource' for responsible authorities preparing [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#).

While the information provided by the Government's Strategy was lighter on details than the [independent National Food Strategy report's vision](#), it covered much of the same scope and focus.

At the time the commitment was made, it was reasonable to predict that the Government's vision was not too dissimilar to the one proposed in the independent review. However, the resignation of the Prime Minister shortly after the Strategy's publication led to a significant shift in UK environmental policy, likely affecting the trajectory of the Land Use Framework's development.

House of Lords Committee on Land Use

Running in parallel to the publication of the Government's Food Strategy, the House of Lords [Committee on Land Use in England](#) was established in 2022, conducting an inquiry into English land use and competing demands for land.

The Committee's final report also called for a Land Use Framework, as well as a Land Use Commission to enable the Framework's "development and promulgation". It welcomed the Government's commitment to a Land Use Framework in its Food Strategy.

In the process of publishing the inquiry's final report, the Committee published a significant amount of detail on what it believed would make for the most effective Land Use Framework, including:

- It should encompass land use priorities across government departments, with the report explicitly referencing departments responsible for the environment, housing, energy, culture and sport, and transport;
- It should operationalise the concept of multifunctionality in the context of finite land;

- It should be firmly embedded in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and associated guidance;
- It should account for a multifunctional approach to afforestation and woodland management, accounting for biodiversity, food production, and suitability of land use;
- It should review the role of green and open spaces in health and wellbeing, also acknowledging near urban and peri-urban areas;
- It should include energy and other large-scale infrastructure projects, working closely with the [National Infrastructure Commission](#);
- It should acknowledge the interaction of housing with land use, but not set out any explicit housing policy or replace any part of the planning system;
- It should assess the use of land for new housing and collate information on projected future demand, identifying areas of land which should be prioritised for non-housing purposes;
- It should reflect and complement other frameworks and their priorities, such as [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#);
- It should feature a central priority to make better multifunctional use of the green belt, particularly for biodiversity, access to nature, and other environmental benefits;
- It should take a multifunctional and locally-driven approach to ‘land sharing’, only adopting a ‘three compartment’ model if it is recognised as a ‘continuum

of land use’ rather than a set of specific and rigid boundaries;

- It should be informed by accessible, rigorous, and frequently updated data;
- It should be developed in consultation with those affected, including a wide range of stakeholders associated with land use, identifying evidence gaps and opportunities for stakeholder engagement and feedback; and
- It should be supported by an independent Land Use Commission responsible for preparing and updating the Framework and supporting the wider set of objectives associated with multifunctional land use.

This was one of the most extensive and wide-reaching visions for a Land Use Framework that had been proposed, going significantly further than the original proposal for a Framework focused on agricultural land use specifically.

The Committee argued in its report that through this more multifunctional approach, a wider category of challenges could be addressed, leading to better outcomes.

The [Government’s response](#) to the final report disagreed with the recommendations for a Land Use Commission, but acknowledged the need to “take a wide range of land uses into account”.

It ruled out either a ‘land sparing’ or ‘land sharing’ approach, as well as prescribing individual land uses from a national level.

However, it agreed to focus the Framework on delivering resilient, multifunctional landscapes.

Perspectives from outside government

Before the Government or the independent review called for a Land Use Framework, the [Food, Farming, and Countryside Commission](#) had already recommended that England adopt a national land use framework in 2019, focused on inspiring ‘cooperation based on the public value of land, mediating and encouraging multipurpose uses’.

This recommendation formed the basis of the House of Lords report’s recommendation, and it also called for a Land Use Commission. Unsurprisingly, it is similar in nature to the recommendations proposed by the House of Lords Committee, albeit with fewer details of how the framework could work in practice.

In particular, it highlighted key aspects of what a successful Framework would include:

- It would compile a comprehensive evidence base;
- It would promote a public value approach to land use, mediating conflicting priorities and proactively encouraging multifunctionality;
- It would support alignment of land use with physical and social geography;
- It would protect the value and beauty of landscapes, giving a particular emphasis to [Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#) and [National Parks](#);
- It would map a connected-up countryside; and
- It would place land use at the centre of

the Government’s approach to addressing environmental challenges.

The substance of the recommendation bears a considerable resemblance to the House of Lords’ perspective, including a multifunctional approach and a perspective that goes beyond agriculture.

Naturally, as one of the first versions of the recommendation to appear, it is less-developed, though the Commission has [continued to advocate](#) for a Land Use Framework and develop further evidence on how it could be delivered.

In August 2024, the Commission reiterated its position in [an online article](#), highlighting how the Land Use Framework could contribute to the new Government’s objectives, particularly around resilience.

Other non-governmental organisations have also share their views on what a Land Use Framework should include and the form it could take.

[Wildlife and Countryside Link](#), a coalition of conservation and wildlife concerned charitable organisations, produced a [briefing on the proposed Land Use Framework](#) in 2023.

It argued that the Framework should “help integrate national and local decision-making across different land uses, to guide greener use decisions and achieve a healthy natural environment” and that it should inform and incentivise national and local policy making on land use by:

- Setting long-term direction and cross-Government accountability for land use change;

- Informing national policy and decision making, such as on [Environmental Land Management Schemes](#); and
- Guiding local decision making through stronger [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#) which help to deliver intended environmental outcomes.
- Setting out specific plans for the pace and scale of land use change on lowland and upland peat with a view towards peatland restoration; and
- Outlining how the Government's target to protect 30% of land for nature would be met.

The charity's CEO, Richard Benwell, also [shared three key features](#) which he believed would be crucial to the Framework's success:

1. it should be target-driven;
2. it should carry weight in planning, permitting, and spending decision; and
3. it should be transparent and adaptable so that accountability is clear.

In the same year, environmental think tank [Green Alliance](#) also [produced a briefing](#) setting out its view on what a good Land Use Framework would include. The Green Alliance briefing highlighted five key functions for the Framework:

- Mapping English food production and its productivity, and the potential for English land to store carbon and support nature, with a view to potential trade-offs between the two; identifying the long-term scale of land use change up to 2050 and estimated costs of delivering that pathway;
- Connecting the Framework to the biggest policies influencing rural land use, such as [Environmental Land Management Schemes](#);
- Identifying the potential to coordinate public and private finance for land use, including agriculture and nature recovery projects;

The Green Alliance recommendations reflect many of the same suggestions as other commentators, though they also include a broader set of considerations associated with land use, expanding the role of the Framework into long-term land use change planning and specific geospatial questions around conservation.

Another vision for the Land Use Framework was set out in WWF-UK's '[Land of Plenty](#)' report. The report calls for Governments to "roll out local and regional land use frameworks to give communities a meaningful voice in shaping the future of their landscapes."

While the WWF's recommendation is framed more generally, it includes a handful of details outlining the organisations' expectations for a Land Use Framework:

- It should be developed with communities, local authorities, and land owners;
- It should be linked to national targets and evidence, bringing together policies on nature, climate, and food; and
- It should link to local priorities, opportunities, and needs, with a view to driving public and private investment for specific actions.

In the IES's [2024 message to government](#), the Institution called for the new Government to “Reach a cross-governmental consensus on the use of land, supported by a Land Use Framework that coordinates – and manages trade-offs for – social, economic, and environmental objectives” with specific reference to food security, public health, and addressing the linked crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution.

The IES also called on the Government to “coordinate nature-based approaches to climate mitigation to maximise the ‘ecosystem services’ provided [through] a consistent approach to Environmental Land Management Schemes, soil health, and the Land Use Framework, informed by scientific insights.”

- Read ‘[Our Shared Mission for Sustainable Wellbeing](#)’ for further information.

Overall, while different NGOs have different perspectives on the priorities that should underpin a Land Use Framework, there are several common threads, emphasising a multifunctional and joined-up approach that can reliably inform decisions at a national and local level.

To some extent, this has been reflected in the Government’s approach. The Framework does prioritise multifunctional decisions, though there are still challenges for the extent to which those priorities will manifest in practice.



Case Study: Scotland's Fourth Land Use Strategy

Now that the Land Use Framework for England has been published, comparison across the devolved administrations can provide an insight into different approaches. The [Scottish Land Commission](#) and [Scotland's Land Use Strategies](#) are given as examples by many of the organisations that first recommended the adoption of a Land Use Framework, providing insights into how such a Framework could operate in practice.

Scotland's [Fourth Land Use Strategy](#) (2026-2031) sets out the vision and objectives of the Scottish Government with regards to the use of land, supported by opportunities to create positive change, such as through the [National Planning Framework](#) and [Regional Land Use Partnerships](#), as well as key policy actions for a more integrated and holistic approach to land use. It seeks to create alignment between existing policies and documents.

In terms of the questions answered by the Land Use Strategy, it encompasses the following:

- **What:** the Land Use Strategy sets out an overall vision, with specific objectives and an approach to how decisions about land use should be made, at around the same level of detail as in the English Land Use Framework.
- **Where:** the Land Use Strategy does not engage in geospatial analysis or mapping, but it discusses different types of land, key considerations, and how each can contribute to the Strategy's objectives.
- **Who:** the Land Use Strategy discusses Regional Land Use Partnerships and how they can be used to develop Regional Land Use Frameworks which represent a more local approach to land use.
- **Why:** the Land Use Strategy sets out the strategic considerations underpinning choices about land use, also linking them to other Scottish policy frameworks.
- **How:** the Land Use Strategy has some commentary on how the overall vision and objectives will be delivered in practice, but does not provide full detailed delivery plans, similarly to the Land Use Framework for England.

The Land Use Framework for England mirrors the content and level of detail in Scotland's Fourth Land Use Strategy in many ways. England's Framework is slightly more detailed in its opportunities for delivery, while Scotland's Strategy is slightly broader in its approach to local delivery partnerships.

Gaps may still remain on the level of implementation for both policies, leaving communities to make their own decisions about delivery, however equivalents to Regional Land Use Partnerships could easily support the process of capacity building for effective delivery of the English Land Use Framework in practice.

Implications of the Land Use Framework

Now that the Government has published the final version of the Land Use Framework, environmental science has a crucial role to play in providing scrutiny and evidence to support the delivery of the Framework in the most effective way.

While there has already been significant commentary on the Framework, only environmental science is positioned to provide evidence of what works in practice and how to take an evidence-informed systems approach to achieving multiple benefits from the use of land.

In particular, the principles at the heart of the Land Use Framework do not represent a systemic perspective, nor do they reach beyond the next generation. Environmental experts will be well-placed to fill these gaps.

Environmental professionals are also well-positioned to draw links between the Framework's seven visions, promoting a multifunctional approach in practice.

The Framework commits to the start of a journey for land use decisions in England. Further iterations of the Framework will be produced every five years and as government policy develops.

The manner in which the Framework is carried through to decision making also creates opportunities for positive engagement by environmental scientists.

At the same time, the Framework has implications for the ways that environmental scientists work, stemming from the practical ways that land use affects different disciplines of environmental science.

Professionals should be prepared that the Framework will shape how decisions are made about biodiversity and nature, planning and housing, and other applications of land use.

Even beyond the specific decisions set out in the Framework, it should be expected that the principles underpinning it will be relevant considerations across public policy.

Other relevant links and resources

How to engage with policy

Policy is increasingly relevant to the work of environmental professionals and having engaged scientists will be vital to creating a [future where people and nature thrive](#).

The IES publishes primers to help member develop their skills around engaging with environmental policy:

- [Policy analysis and awareness](#)
- [Evidence-informed policy making](#)
- [Cost-benefit analysis for policy](#)
- [Influencing the UK Parliament](#)
- [Cross-departmental policy](#)

Specific case studies for engaging with environmental policy are also provided in '[Speaking up for science](#)' which provides examples of how professionals can engage with environmental policy effectively.

The IES also [runs training](#) to help professionals learn more about policy and how they can engage with policy decisions. On-demand training sessions are available for sign-ups [on the IES website](#).

Other links and resources

Find out more about existing legislation on this topic:

- [Environmental Improvement Plan for England](#)
- [Independent National Food Strategy](#)
- [Food, Farming, and Countryside Commission report](#)
- [House of Lords Land Use report](#)

Read other relevant briefings and resources from the IES:

- [IES response to the land use consultation](#)
- [Our Shared Mission for Sustainable Wellbeing](#)
- [Environmental Policy Implementation Community](#)

To support our work, consider [joining the IES](#) or [becoming an Affiliate](#).

Get in touch with Joseph Lewis, Head of Policy (joseph@the-ies.org) to let us know your thoughts for future briefings, or with your suggestions for content.

“Land use decisions need to contribute to a collective and coherent whole ... to create a country where people and nature thrive.”

Joseph Lewis, Head of Policy



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