



The
Wildlife
Trusts

COP27 – the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Wildlife Trusts' briefing



“The window of time we have to act is closing fast, we must urgently adapt and reduce emissions, because current targets are not enough.”

Alok Sharma, UK COP26 President

This November, Egypt will host the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – also known as COP27. This follows the COP26 climate conference held in Glasgow last year.

COP27 will be a crucial moment in defining our future global climate trajectory. We must ensure nature retains a prominent position in international climate action.

What is COP?

COP - meaning Conference of the Parties - is the decision-making meeting responsible for reviewing the implementation of the UN's climate agreement, the UNFCCC. It brings together the 197 nations and territories that have signed on to the Framework Convention – these are known as “Parties”.

At COP21 in 2015, the Parties agreed a new legally binding global treaty, committing to ambitious action to limit average temperature change to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. COP26, hosted by the UK in Glasgow in 2021, was the first real test of Parties' commitment to this Agreement.

The Glasgow Climate Pact agreed at COP26 managed to keep “1.5 alive” – i.e. it is still theoretically possible, but barely. Unprecedented commitments were made to ‘phase down’ coal and end “inefficient” fossil fuel subsidies, whilst smaller groups of countries agreed to slash methane emissions, halt deforestation, tackle transport emissions and end financing of overseas fossil fuels. But action was missing on climate finance for those countries on the front line of climate impacts, as well as loss and damage, the consequences of climate change that go beyond what we can adapt to.

Little progress made

Almost one year on, very little progress has been made on the key Glasgow commitments. Greenhouse gas emissions reached record levels in 2021, driven by an upsurge in coal use. Based on current policies, global temperature could reach 2.7°C or higher by the end of this century, far above the 1.5°C target. Climate breakdown is accelerating rapidly, observed impacts are worse than expected, and soon they will outpace our ability to limit and adapt to them. In 2022, records have been broken across the planet including temperatures exceeding 40°C for the first time in the UK, and flooding in Pakistan reportedly covered one third of the country.

What do we want to see from COP27?

We cannot restore nature without tackling climate change, and we cannot tackle climate change without restoring nature. The Wildlife Trusts want to see the bold rhetoric and ambition translated into real action this decade to tackle the twin nature and climate crises together.



A diver explores sea grass and the sea bed – both of which store carbon – at Studland Bay, Dorset (Paul Naylor)

The Wildlife Trusts' key messages for COP27 are:

Time is running out to avoid catastrophic warming above 1.5C.

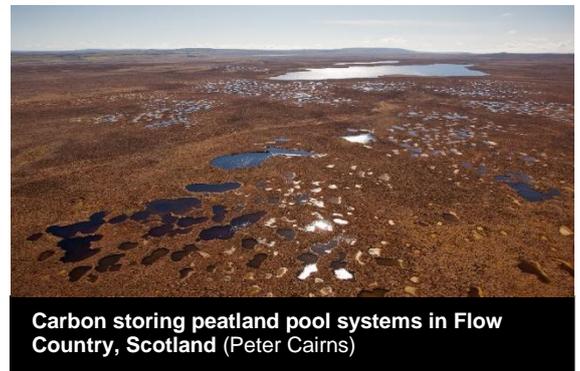
- Since COP26, nations have not done enough to pledge further emissions reductions to 'keep 1.5 alive'. Even with Parties' new or updated commitments (known as Nationally Determined Contributions), we are still on track for 2.4°C of warming by the end of this century, and on the basis of current implementation the average projection is 2.7°C.
- The Glasgow Climate Pact called on Parties to strengthen their short-term 2030 carbon reduction targets. Since COP26, only 21 Parties have done this, the majority from less developed countries with smaller responsibility for causing climate change. Wealthier countries must step up and make ambitious commitments to cut emissions.

If the UK wants to be a world leader on climate and nature, it must ensure it is taking the same action at home it is encouraging others to take internationally.

- If the UK Government does not take bold action at home to restore nature, it cannot expect countries to heed its calls for ambitious global policies.
- At home, progress must be made by all governments in the UK on commitment to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030. Currently, only 3% of land can reliably be said to be protected for nature.
- The UK must strengthen, not weaken, its environmental protections, ensuring that our most precious sites are safe for future generations.

Protecting nature and prioritising resilience is becoming even more critical in the wake of global extreme weather events in 2022.

- At COP26 there was deep recognition of the interconnection between the nature and climate crises. This must extend forward into COP27 decisions.
- Keeping 1.5° alive must be coupled with a target to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030. It's time to get serious about putting nature in recovery across 30% of the UK's land and sea by 2030 to tackle the twin climate and nature crises
- Investment in nature must be central to decisions on finance at COP27, with wealthy nations ensuring global majority countries can invest in nature to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts.



COP27 is about nature too

Action to reverse the decline in biodiversity must be central to the negotiations at COP27 – otherwise we will not effectively make progress on the climate or nature crises. Though COP27 is not explicitly a nature conference, it would be short-sighted to their interdependency and nature's ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The Wildlife Trusts want to see integration between the agreements made at COP27 in November and the decisions that will be made regarding nature at the Convention on Biological Diversity's 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) in Montreal in December. We welcome commitments from COP26 President Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP that he is working hard with China to align the outcomes of the two COPs.