



## NSA Policy Position

### NSA position on rewilding

#### **Background**

- Rewilding aims to restore (an area of land) to a 'natural' state, so that nature (flora & fauna), having previously disappeared, might return under its own volition when its habitat is restored.
- Rewilding Britain defines rewilding as the large-scale restoration of ecosystems where nature can take care of itself.
- High profile examples of rewilding include the Knepp Estate, West Sussex; RSPB Geltsdale, Cumbria; Cefn Garthenor, Tregaron, and Dundreggan, Loch Lomond.
- The 2023 State of Nature flagged the UK as one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world – 19% decline since 1970.
- Rewilding is often linked with reintroducing species previously extinct from Britain, such as Beavers, Lynx, White-Tailed Eagles, and Wolves.

#### **NSA Believes**

- NSA affirms a balanced, case-by-case view of rewilding proposals and supports appropriate schemes where projects suit environment, local ecosystems, and are beneficial to current wildlife populations.
- Nature recovery is possible through sheep farming.
- Any changes to reverting managed landscapes to self-regulating landscapes must be the result of a robust decision-making process based on thorough impact assessments developed with input from all stakeholders (WHERE Private land? Or public land?).
- Farming's cultural heritage and food production must be considered before management is switched off.
- A consideration of the detrimental impacts, particularly in the short term, must be considered. Most land management decisions have winners and losers.
- Close to 70% of the UK is farmed and farming practices are key to biodiversity maintenance and recovery.



## Reasoning

- Sheep farming already contributes to rural economies based on tourism, an oft cited advantage of rewilding. Snowdon generates £70m in tourist revenue from 4 million visitors a year. The Lake District has close to 20 million visitors a year and generates £2bn a year.
- Rewilding precludes agriculture and shrub management, either by grazing, cutting or burning. Dry periods in 2018, 2022 and 2025 highlighted the dangers posed by unmanaged vegetation. In many cases large fires engulfed rewilded habitats – proof of the challenges of transitioning from a managed to a “rewilded” landscape.
- Landscape Recovery schemes are delivering landscape level benefits, not just for wildlife, but other ecosystems services around carbon and water management, while also continuing to provide food and fibre through livestock farming.

## Future

- In its Land Use Consultation, the Government has targeted 9% land use change away from agricultural use – 760kha - for creation/restoration of coastal, woodland, peat-dependent and peat-forming habitats, which might fit into a rewilding scheme.
- Biodiversity net gain has seen England’s planning framework adopt habitat creation and ecosystems delivery to secure permissions. Net benefit for Biodiversity (Wales) and Biodiversity Net Gain in the Scottish planning framework are expected to follow.
- Farming in Protected Landscapes, Landscape Recovery and Countryside Stewardship are payment vehicles for sustainable food production and nature recovery.

Updates:  
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