



4 May 2023

Dear Secretary of State

Delivering the '30 by 30' Target

The IUCN National Committee UK's (NCUK) Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) was encouraged to see you, along with your G7 counterparts, agree a joint statement on tackling nature loss at the meeting of Environment and Climate Ministers in April. We were particularly pleased to see the reaffirmed commitment to achieving the target of effectively conserving and managing at least 30% of terrestrial areas and inland water areas, and similarly, for at least 30% of marine and coastal areas by 2030 (so-called '30 by 30').

The mandate and goal of PAWG is to provide technical and independent advice and analysis to relevant stakeholders that can support you in your aspirations to achieve the '30 by 30' target¹. We do this using our collective expertise in this subject area and as a UK working group aligned to the work of IUCN at the international level, which has established a standard by which the '30 by 30' target will be assessed (see Annex 1).

To this end, PAWG has offered support to officials from Defra and its statutory agencies (as well as other interested stakeholders), together with officials from the Devolved Administrations, the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, in considering how best to deliver the '30 by 30' target.

We recommend that the UK Government should now publish robust, clear and detailed criteria and guidance by which it will be possible to assess both Protected Areas and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) for inclusion in '30 by 30'. Both Protected Areas and OECMs are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity and through IUCN guidance.

Once the criteria have been published, we believe that they should be piloted and refined over the next 12 months. We continue to offer our independent support to navigate this complex work area and to ensure the UK Government adequately meets international standards and continues to demonstrate leadership in this space.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James Robinson'.

Dr. James Robinson

Chair of the IUCN National Committee UK's Protected Areas Working Group

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¹ <https://iucn-nc.uk/projects/ncuk-expert-working-groups/pawg/>

Annex 1. International guidelines for '30 by 30'

The WCPA is an IUCN Commission that comprises a network of 2,500 experts from 140 countries that mobilises action in science, conservation, policy, and engagement to support well managed and connected Protected Areas². It has been developing international standards for Protected Areas and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) since it was first set up. It does this by publishing international guidelines for Protected Area management categories, governance types and management effectiveness. IUCN has been keen to promote these guidelines across the globe and PAWG uses this wealth of international advice and guidance to inform assessment criteria and other matters in the UK.

These guidelines state that the 30% figure should include only Protected Areas and OECMs:

- A *Protected Area* is defined as “a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”
- An *OECM* is defined as “a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio–economic, and other locally relevant values.”

There are six categories of Protected Areas, which can be governed and managed by governments, the private sector, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, or any combination of these. Ensuring protected and conserved areas deliver effective conservation outcomes is essential in meeting the 30% target. Thus, the following considerations should be applied by all countries:

- All Protected Areas should have clear ecological objectives, be managed effectively with nature conservation as the dominant priority, and be free of any environmentally damaging activities.
- OECMs must be assessed on a case-by-case basis and must demonstrate they are delivering the effective long-term conservation of important biodiversity.
- OECMs complement Protected Areas and are equally important for maintaining biodiversity, even though they may not be managed primarily for conservation. They should achieve the same level of *in situ* or whole ecosystem biodiversity conservation as Protected Areas.
- OECMs are not meant to be multiple-use production areas (e.g. production forests, plantations and fisheries areas) that are managed with some biodiversity considerations. While such areas are important, they should be counted toward additional sustainable use targets and not toward the '30 by 30' target.
- All Protected Areas and recognised OECMs should be reported to the two Protected Planet databases: the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) and the World Database on OECMs (WDOECM), both managed by the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

² <https://www.iucn.org/our-union/commissions/world-commission-protected-areas>