New plans to reshape how we protect and manage our land

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England’s first Land Use Framework sets out a plan for managing the country’s finite land to ensure the nation’s long-term resilience.

The government has published England’s first ever Land Use Framework – a plan for delivering new homes, nature restoration, clean energy and food security. It demonstrates clearly that there is enough land to deliver the government’s objectives provided we use land more efficiently and for multiple benefits.

For too long, fragmented decision-making has led to inefficient land use and left us exposed in the short term and vulnerable to climate change. Three of the five worst harvests on record were in the last five years and a third of our farmland is now at high risk of flooding.

Based on the most advanced land use analysis ever undertaken, the Framework will support food security and national resilience, making a clear, long-term commitment to maintaining food production in England. At the same time, it will also support farmers to diversify and remain profitable in the face of extreme weather and market shocks.

Farmers, who have just experienced one of the wettest winters on record, will benefit from sophisticated new modelling to help them future-proof their businesses. The Framework sets out how incentives will be optimised to deliver for nature and resilient food production. It will also give more rights and greater certainty to tenant farmers, who manage a third of England’s farmland, by reforming the Farm Tenancy Forum to give them a greater role in policy making.

The Framework gives the long-term clarity needed to meet our environmental commitments and the policy to back it up, with a single spatial map of England’s natural assets showing where nature recovery can have the greatest impact. This means by 2030, we will see restored peatlands, healthier coastal habitats, expanded wetlands, and canopy cover lining our urban streets.

For families waiting on a new home, the Framework will help steer development to the most suitable locations, away from flood plains – helping to accelerate delivery of the government’s promise of 1.5 million new homes while protecting critical habitats.

Environment Secretary Emma Reynolds, in a speech at the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, said:

> Our land is a vital national asset, but it is finite. We cannot be held back by the false choices between building homes and producing food, restoring nature and supporting farmers, or delivering clean energy and protecting landscapes.
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> With better data, smarter tools and strategic planning, we can meet all these needs. This ensures people can manage their land in the way that works best for them while unlocking growth, strengthening food security and protecting our environment.

The government’s new Framework gives decision-makers a single, shared vision for how we can play

to the strengths of our diverse landscapes. This will help landowners, planners and energy providers to make effective decisions about where we locate new infrastructure, bolstering the country's resilience to both short-term shocks and long-term vulnerability to climate change.

This comes as the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero today (18 March) announces plans to cut red tape and allow farmers, as well as businesses and public sector organisations to install a single small onshore wind turbine without needing to apply for planning permission. This could cut energy bills, making it faster and cheaper to generate clean homegrown power on site, as part of the government delivering the clean power mission and protecting businesses against volatile fossil fuels markets.

Over the next year, the government will establish a dedicated Land Use Unit to drive delivery of the Framework and produce England's first single map of national spatial priorities for Defra. Alongside more effective spatial planning for infrastructure and growth, this will align national and local strategies, accelerate decision-making and give more certainty to investors and developers.

The Land Use Framework was developed after extensive public consultation, which began last January, and including regional roadshows as part of a national listening exercise.

Energy Secretary Ed Miliband said:

> This landmark blueprint shows decisively that our drive for clean, homegrown power goes hand-in-hand with food security and our natural environment.
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> We are ensuring that the countryside continues to feed the nation, while delivering the clean homegrown power that we need to protect household energy bills from volatile fossil fuel markets.

Housing Secretary Steve Reed said:

> We've been clear from the outset that our planning reforms will achieve a win-win for both housebuilding and nature recovery.
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> The first of its kind in England, this Framework will ensure we make smarter decisions on land used to build the homes and infrastructure we need, while protecting and enhancing our natural environment and wildlife.

Henry Dimbleby said:

> The Land Use Framework arrives in a week when the Iran conflict has pushed up fertiliser prices and reminded us how exposed our food and energy systems are to global shocks.
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> The case for using our land more intelligently – reducing dependence on imported inputs, building a more resilient food system and accelerating the shift to clean, homegrown power – is no longer theoretical. It's urgent.
>
> This framework provides the evidence base to do it. It is an excellent piece of work. Now

we need the implementation to match.

Jake Fiennes, Director Conservation, Holkham Estate said:

> How we use our land has never been more important. As we balance the needs of nature, food production, energy, housing and infrastructure, Defra's Land Use Framework is an important step towards a strategic approach.
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> I am pleased to see Defra's Land Use Framework published today and am fully supportive of its ambition.
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> This framework should act as a helpful guide to use land is the most efficient and effective way.
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> The Land Use Framework provides the opportunity for change and a new way of thinking about how we best use our land.

The Framework will provide the principles, advanced data and tools for national and local government, landowners, and developers to make the right decisions to meet the demands of the land. This will support better outcomes for nature, to boost our food security, help us combat climate change, and deliver the homes and infrastructure we need.

Additional information:

- You can access the published Land Use Framework here.

Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, said:

> Considering the simultaneous demand for housing, food production, new infrastructure, space for Nature recovery, recreation and industry, it is vital that we have an overarching framework to optimise land use for all of this and more across the limited space we have in England.
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> By taking a more strategic view of how we use land, we can halt and reverse Nature decline, while also enabling the new homes and infrastructure the country needs, protecting food security and building resilience to the impacts of climate change.
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> The Land Use Framework is a vital step forward, offering opportunities to move beyond binary choices and toward more joined-up approaches. The more integrated thinking that we must embrace in meeting multiple pressing challenges at once will restore Nature while also meeting the country's needs for housing, energy, water and food.

Alan Lovell, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

> The Land Use Framework is a significant and timely step forward – giving us the tools to make smarter, more joined-up decisions about how our land is used. It sets out the scale of change required to balance environmental priorities – water, climate and nature – with the equally pressing demands of food production, housing and development.

> Using lower-grade agricultural land for natural flood management, for instance, can cut flood risk, boost biodiversity and build more resilient landscapes – critical approaches as we adapt to a changing climate while delivering real benefits for communities and the environment.

Richard Stanford, Chief Executive of the Forestry Commission, said:

> There has never been a more urgent moment to invest in creating woodland here at home. The Land Use Framework sets out clear principles to drive that investment in the appropriate areas, recognising the wide-ranging benefits woodland creation brings – from tackling climate change and supporting nature recovery to strengthening timber production and improving water quality.
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> This will be instrumental in meeting the government's tree cover targets while addressing the pressing need to improve our domestic timber security and at the same time safeguarding priority habitats and avoiding the most productive agricultural land.

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