

Security assessment on global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security, published in January 2026

Westminster Hall debate

3 September 2026

Background

- This debate on the government's January 2026 [national security assessment](#) of global biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse is an important opportunity to press ministers on transparency, preparedness and action.
- The assessment is clear: the breakdown of ecosystems and destruction of nature is accelerating, threatening the UK's security, prosperity and resilience. Biodiversity underpins food and water security, public health, economic stability and the functioning of critical infrastructure.
- National security risks of this scale should be proactively disclosed to Parliament. The Environmental Audit Committee has formally requested the unabridged assessment and was refused.
- Recent extreme heat, drought, crop failures, falling river and reservoir levels, marine heatwaves and pressure on food supply chains underline that resilience is already a live UK security issue. Nature recovery, water resilience, soil health, grassland restoration, peatland recovery, woodland creation, marine protection and urban greening should be treated as national preparedness measures.

Core facts in the assessment

- The assessment identifies six ecosystem regions as critical to UK national security: the Amazon rainforest, Congo Basin, coral reefs, mangroves, the Himalayas, and boreal forests in Russia and Canada.
- It warns there is a realistic possibility that some critical ecosystems could begin to collapse by 2030 or sooner, driven by biodiversity loss, land use change, pollution, climate change and other pressures. The likely consequences include disrupted weather patterns, crop failures, water scarcity, infectious disease outbreaks, migration pressures, conflict, economic insecurity and greater competition between states for resources.
- The domestic risk matters too. Declining water quality, stressed fish populations, flood risk, degraded soils, weakened marine habitats and over-reliance on imported food and fertiliser all affect UK infrastructure, food security and communities directly.
- Species decline is also a practical security issue. Bats support food systems through pest control and, globally, pollination and seed dispersal; wild plants and fungi form the foundations of ecosystems; and insects support pollination, pest control, decomposition and nutrient cycling.

Why this is a security issue

- **Nature recovery is national security investment:** restoring ecosystems and using nature-based solutions can strengthen the resilience of infrastructure, communities, food systems and defence assets to future environmental shocks.
- **Healthy ecosystems reduce risk before crises hit:** floodplains, grasslands, peatlands, wetlands, saltmarshes and seagrass can cut flood risk, store carbon, cool urban areas, support farm resilience and improve everyday wellbeing.
- **Marine and seabed risks are growing:** marine heatwaves are damaging habitats and fisheries, while deep seabed mining could create new environmental and economic risks without resolving critical mineral dependencies.

How should the government respond?

- Publish the full assessment and evidence base, including scenarios, confidence levels, departmental risk ownership and impact modelling.
- Designate ecosystem collapse as a formal national security risk in the National Security Risk Assessment, resilience planning, defence assumptions, food strategy, economic policy and foreign policy priorities.
- Create a cross-government action plan on climate resilience, led by a Minister for Adaptation in the Cabinet Office, including oversight of the development and delivery of the Fourth National Adaptation Programme (NAP4).
- Stop UK finance and trade driving ecosystem destruction overseas through stronger due diligence, while introducing mandatory business reporting on nature-related impacts and dependencies.
- Make protection of critical ecosystems a diplomatic priority through climate and nature finance, trade policy and support for Indigenous peoples and local communities, while maintaining UK leadership on international conservation.
- Report annually to Parliament on ecosystem collapse risks and government progress, including delivery of biodiversity targets in the Environmental Improvement Plan and Global Biodiversity Framework.

Suggested interventions

Will the government publish the full national security assessment or give its reasons for withholding this from Parliament?

What specific policy changes have been made since the assessment was completed, and who is leading the government's response to ecosystem collapse risks across departments?

Will ministers recognise healthy, functioning ecosystems as critical national infrastructure in decision making?

What action is the UK taking to protect globally important ecosystems such as the Amazon and Congo Basin?