

The main title of the slide, "Biodiversity on the brink.", is displayed in a large, bold font. "Biodiversity" is in orange, and "on the brink." is in white. A thick green curved line arches over the text from the left side of the slide towards the right. The background of the slide is a composite image: the left side shows a dark, smoky cityscape with a factory emitting a plume of dark smoke, while the right side shows a bright, sunny cityscape with a single, large, vibrant green tree in the foreground. The ground in the foreground is cracked and dry, with a small pool of water reflecting the tree and the sky.

Are organisations doing enough  
to reverse nature loss?

# Contents

3	Introduction
4	Methodology
5	Key findings
6	Not yet a boardroom priority
8	Nature crisis: in conversation
9	Knowledge and resource gaps
10	Lack of a plan
12	Government support
13	Words from BAM's COO
14	Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes



# Introduction

---

## 3 Introduction

---

## 4 Methodology

---

## 5 Key findings

---

## 6 Not yet a boardroom priority

---

## 8 Nature crisis: in conversation

---

## 9 Knowledge and resource gaps

---

## 10 Lack of a plan

---

## 12 Government support

---

## 13 Words from BAM's COO

---

## 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

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### We are in the midst of a biodiversity crisis.

Nature loss has reached catastrophic levels, with one in six species at risk of extinction in the UK.

Globally more than half of the world's GDP is either moderately or highly dependent on nature<sup>1</sup>, meaning without thriving natural habitats, supply chains would collapse and most companies couldn't function. Beyond supporting economies and mitigating climate change, nature provides essential services such as water purification, soil fertility, flood protection, air quality improvement, and enhances community wellbeing.

But, while nature, carbon emissions, climate change and our natural resources are all intertwined, we do not prioritise them in equal measure. The nature crisis has a huge bearing on climate change more broadly – and recovering nature can provide solutions to it.

But how does the rest of UK business and organisations view nature loss? Is biodiversity a priority, and do sustainability professionals have the tools and buy-in to do an effective job?

We commissioned YouGov to ask Sustainability & ESG decision-makers in both the private and public sectors at large organisations to provide us with crucial insights into how biodiversity is currently addressed.

These decision-makers covered some of the sectors most likely to affect our natural environment, including manufacturing and retail, healthcare and transportation.

Their views and experiences are helpful in informing how we go about addressing nature recovery at a UK-wide level, and we look forward to sharing the findings with UK Government, sustainability professionals and stakeholders.

As the built environment has long played a role in putting natural habitats at risk, BAM UK & Ireland has put biodiversity at the heart of its sustainability strategy. It is our responsibility to recover, protect and enhance the natural environment in each and every project we work on.

We recognise that nature loss is a huge and complex issue that isn't easily resolved but we are committed to working with clients, partners and suppliers to build a sustainable tomorrow.

# Methodology

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology**
- 5 Key findings
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps
- 10 Lack of a plan
- 12 Government support
- 13 Words from BAM's COO
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

## What?



Online survey of ESG and Sustainability decision makers in the UK in both public and private sectors from large organisations +250 employees.

## How many?



257 respondents – drawn from both private and public sectors – completed the survey.

## When?



July 2024

## Why?



To better understand how organisations prioritise biodiversity and related topics.

# Key findings

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Key findings**
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps
- 10 Lack of a plan
- 12 Government support
- 13 Words from BAM's COO
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

### Biodiversity as a strategic priority

40% of ESG and sustainability decision-makers believe that biodiversity is a strategic priority for their organisation.

### Importance to leadership

35% think senior leadership considers biodiversity as 'very important', often overshadowed by issues like energy savings, waste reduction, and emissions reduction.

### Leadership buy-in

One third of respondents (34%) report complete buy-in from senior leadership for their biodiversity strategies, with a further half experiencing partial buy-in.

### Financial effectiveness

58% say their organisation has an allocated budget for biodiversity targets. However, most believe that their budget will only make a small difference.

### Biodiversity budgets

25% say that biodiversity is among the top three sustainability issues their organisation spends the most on. Most budgets are prioritising carbon and waste reduction.

### Government support

Incentives for biodiversity-friendly business practices and biodiversity loans are the most common requests from organisations for government assistance.

### Biodiversity as a hot topic

Biodiversity is discussed less frequently than other sustainability topics such as climate change and ESG. 30% of respondents report that biodiversity is discussed at least weekly.

### Dedicated teams and training

Three in five organisations have a dedicated biodiversity team, typically small (up to five members). Training on biodiversity is offered in 34% of organisations.



- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Key findings
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority**
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps
- 10 Lack of a plan
- 12 Government support
- 13 Words from BAM's COO
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

# Biodiversity: not a top priority yet

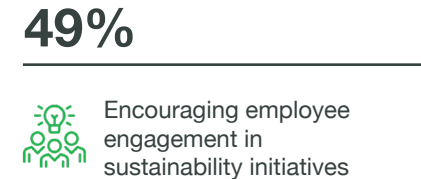
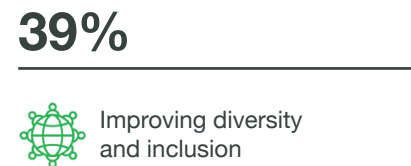
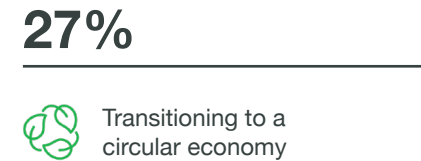
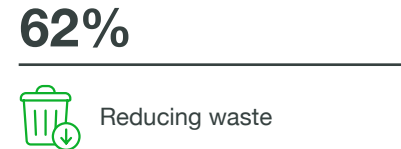
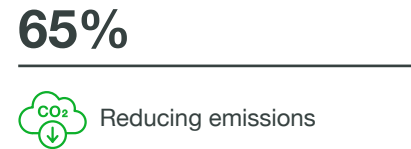
**Other green issues are prioritised over Biodiversity.**

**Almost four in ten decision-makers (37%) consider it a top agenda item, compared to seven in ten who prioritise ESG (71%), waste reduction (71%), and decarbonisation (68%).**

This disparity is further reflected in budget allocations: just a quarter of ESG and sustainability decision-makers (27%) rank biodiversity among the top three sustainability issues their organisation invests in. Most budgets are directed towards reducing carbon emissions and waste management.

**➔ Top three ESG issues organisation spends the most on**

Companies were asked to rank up to three options from the topics below. The graphic shows the % ranking for each option in their top three.

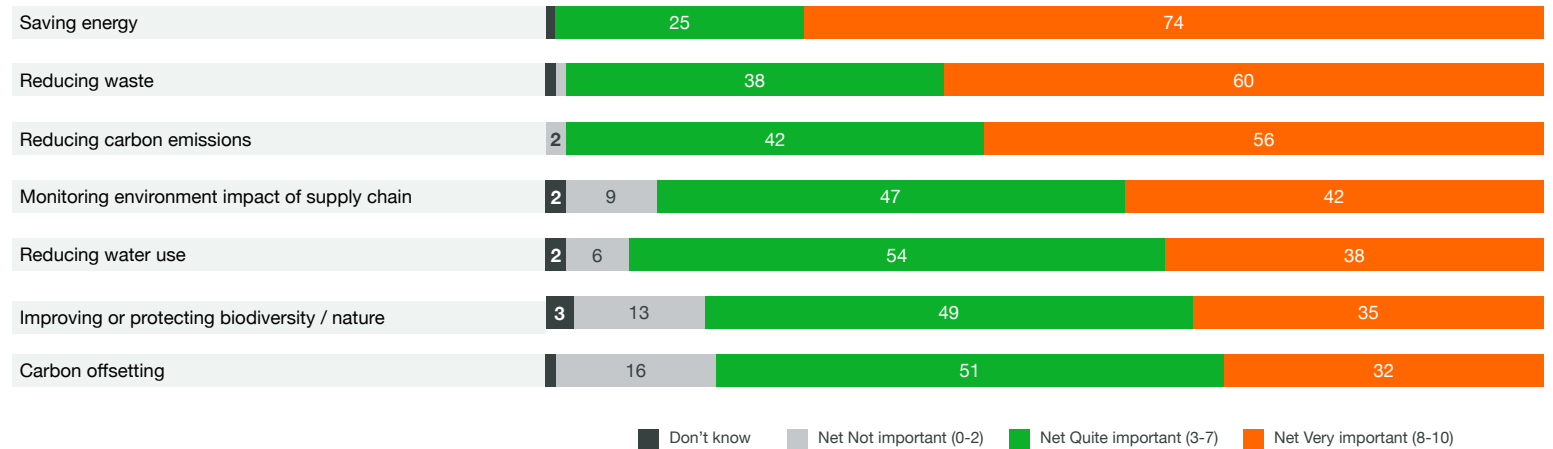


- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Key findings
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority**
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps
- 10 Lack of a plan
- 12 Government support
- 13 Words from BAM's COO
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

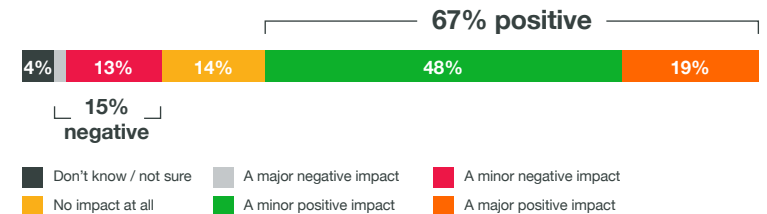
## Biodiversity: a low priority for leaders

### How important are these environmental issues to senior leaders?

Saving energy, reducing waste and carbon emissions are ranked as very important for a majority of organisations in our survey. **84% said protecting biodiversity is very or quite important, while over one in ten said biodiversity is not important.**



We also asked ESG professionals what kind of impact, if any, do they think their organisation has on nature in the communities in which they operate? The majority (67%) thought they have a positive impact.



# Nature crisis: in conversation

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Key findings
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation**
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps
- 10 Lack of a plan
- 12 Government support
- 13 Words from BAM's COO
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

➔ **How often, if at all, are each of the following discussed within your organisation?**

Our findings show that Biodiversity is less frequently discussed within organisations compared to other sustainability-related issues such as ESG and Net Zero on a monthly bases.





# Knowledge and resource gaps evident

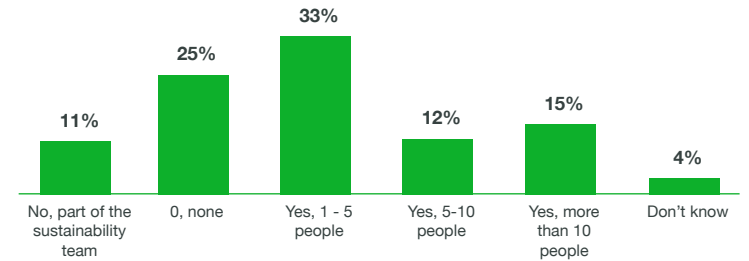
- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Key findings
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps**
- 10 Lack of a plan
- 12 Government support
- 13 Words from BAM's COO
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

When asked directly about levels of knowledge relating to biodiversity, **a quarter of sustainability experts (ca. 25%) don't feel that their organisation currently has the expertise to address biodiversity as an environmental issue.** However, **61% agree that their organisation does have the knowledge required.**

→ To what extent, if at all, do you either agree or disagree that your organisation currently has the knowledge to address biodiversity as an environmental issue?



→ Do you have dedicated staff members or a team looking at the biodiversity issue?



- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Key findings
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps
- 10 Lack of a plan**
- 12 Government support
- 13 Words from BAM's COO
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

## A third of businesses have a biodiversity plan

Devising biodiversity strategies, and then outlining clear metrics to measure the outcomes of those plans, is still a long way from being commonplace. Current business focus is on compliance rather than proactive excellence in biodiversity efforts. **Around three in ten (30%) businesses anticipate having a functioning biodiversity strategy within the next year.**

**However, almost half of all respondents (48%) say their organisation has defined measures in place to assess their own impact on biodiversity.** A further quarter (23%) have plans to introduce this, while a similar number (20%) have no such intentions.

**Does your organisation have measurements in place to assess any impact on biodiversity that may be caused by the activities you carry out, or the products and services you offer?**

**48%**

Yes, we do

**21%**

No, we have no plans to introduce this

**23%**

No, but we plan to introduce this

**7%**

Don't know

Limited financial and human resources are the main constraints for ESG professionals in effectively addressing their organisation's challenges.



When asked what the biggest challenges are when implementing, biodiversity strategies, a majority of ESG / Sustainability decision makers said budget (46%) and resources (45%) are the biggest hurdles.

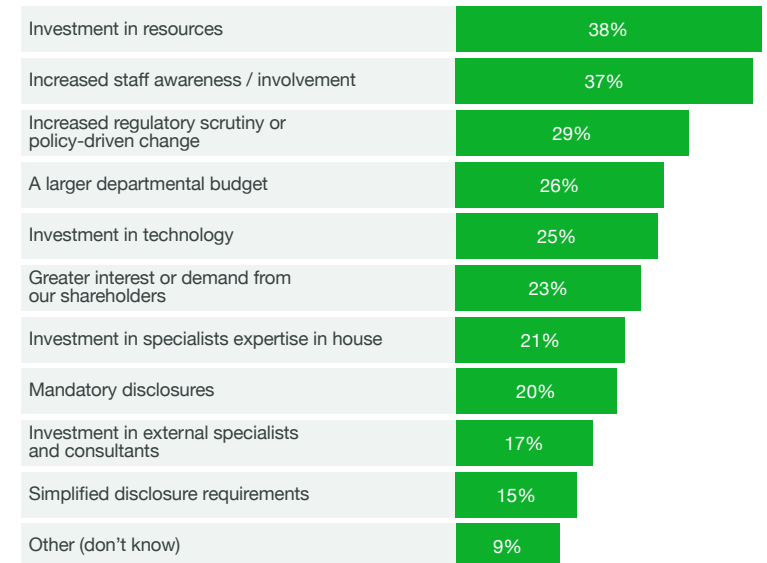
# What's needed to effect **meaningful change**?

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Key findings
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps
- 10 Lack of a plan**
- 12 Government support
- 13 Words from BAM's COO
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

**Training around biodiversity is only offered in a minority (34%) of organisations, but positively, a quarter of respondents plan to introduce such training.** This suggests an increasing recognition of the importance of education around biodiversity. Roughly three in five businesses (58%) have an allocated budget to deliver on biodiversity targets. However, most (38%) believe that the allocated budget available will only make a small difference, indicating a need for increased financial commitment within the organisation.

**Two-thirds (67%) of respondents agree that investing in biodiversity and nature can lead to better business outcomes**, while only one in ten (9%) disagree. This strong belief in the business case for biodiversity can drive further internal investment and focus. Opinions on whether organisations are doing enough to support biodiversity are polarised, however, with 42% believing their efforts are sufficient and a similar proportion (47%) disagreeing. This split indicates a need for more consistent and ambitious efforts across the board.

## ➔ What sustainability professionals think is needed to achieve better biodiversity outcomes:



The current state of biodiversity in UK businesses shows a positive perception and some level of commitment, but significant challenges remain. Weak biodiversity budgets, knowledge gaps, and varying levels of urgency and leadership support hinder progress. Moving forward, increased investment in resources, training, and leadership buy-in will be crucial to elevating biodiversity as a core component of business sustainability strategies.

# How can the UK Government support nature recovery?

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Key findings
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps
- 10 Lack of a plan
- 12 Government support**
- 13 Words from BAM's COO
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

## How can the government help your organisations improve its impact on biodiversity?

65%



Incentives for biodiversity-friendly business practices

55%



Introducing biodiversity related grants and loans

48%



Offer training and resources on how to assess and minimise biodiversity impact

47%



Legislation requiring businesses to report on their impact

25%



Changing planning laws

5%



Other (please specify, don't know, none of these)

25%



Streaming disclosure requirements



Biodiversity is society's next big challenge. Nature decline is a reality and we ignore it at our peril. As a society we're taking action to reduce carbon emissions as we're witnessing the devastating impact fossil fuels have on the planet and our lives. Now it's time to give nature recovery the same priority – as without biodiversity we cannot function.

As business leaders we have the opportunity to make biodiversity recovery a priority, through measuring our impact, setting targets and investing in the right resources. The UK Government alone cannot resolve the crisis – we all have to play our part.

**John Wilkinson**  
COO, BAM UK & Ireland



# Our sector has a responsibility to help biodiversity recovery

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Key findings
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps
- 10 Lack of a plan
- 12 Government support
- 13 Words from BAM's COO**
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes

## Making biodiversity a priority

The construction sector must play a crucial role in biodiversity recovery due to its significant impact on land use, resource consumption, and environmental health.

Construction activities often lead to habitat destruction and environmental degradation, which contribute to biodiversity loss. By making biodiversity a priority from the start of a project and by adopting sustainable practices, such as preserving natural habitats, integrating green spaces, and sourcing materials responsibly, the sector can mitigate these negative impacts.

Moreover, the construction sector is a major consumer of natural resources and generates substantial waste and emissions, all of which harm ecosystems. Implementing cleaner technologies and reducing resource consumption can minimise environmental damage. Given its large-scale influence, the sector must lead by example, promoting biodiversity-friendly practices across industries and through supply chains.

While legal and social responsibilities are increasing to protect biodiversity, it's vital that, with the capacity for change our sector has, we do more than just comply.

## What have we done so far to tackle this issue?

BAM recognises the vital importance of biodiversity conservation and recovery, as it is a core component of our sustainability strategy.

We also know that we all must do more to not only prevent, but reverse biodiversity loss. This is why we aspire to transition our business from conventional (grey) to environmentally conscious (green), where construction doesn't work against nature but with it.

In 2023, we were proud to be the first contractor to sign the Nature Positive Business Pledge - a new framework designed to support businesses to act on biodiversity loss and contribute towards nature restoration.



**John Wilkinson**  
COO, BAM UK & Ireland

# Five steps to improved biodiversity in business

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Key findings
- 6 Not yet a boardroom priority
- 8 Nature crisis: in conversation
- 9 Knowledge and resource gaps
- 10 Lack of a plan
- 12 Government support
- 13 Words from BAM's COO
- 14 Five steps to improved Biodiversity outcomes**

## 1 Integrate Biodiversity into business strategy

**Embed biodiversity goals:** Ensure that biodiversity considerations are integrated into the company's overall sustainability strategy by setting clear, actionable biodiversity goals and metrics.

**Leadership commitment:** Secure commitment from senior leadership to prioritise biodiversity, ensuring it receives the attention and resources needed. This commitment should be reflected in corporate policies and strategic planning.

## 2 Invest in biodiversity initiatives

**Allocate budget:** Dedicate specific financial resources to biodiversity projects and initiatives. This investment can include funding for habitat restoration, conservation programs, and partnerships with environmental organisations.

**Government incentives:** Utilise available government incentives and funding opportunities for biodiversity-friendly practices and projects, such as biodiversity loans and grants.

## 3 Enhance knowledge and skills

**Provide training:** Implement comprehensive training programs on biodiversity for employees at all levels. This can improve understanding of biodiversity issues, best practices, and the role each employee plays in supporting biodiversity.

**Build expertise:** Develop or hire expertise in biodiversity to guide the organisation's efforts, including specialists who can help design and implement effective biodiversity strategies.

## 4 Develop and implement biodiversity strategies

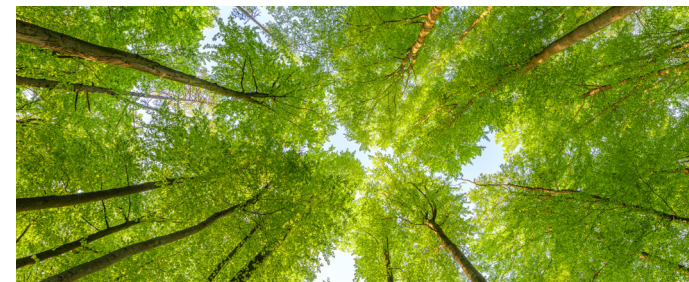
**Create a biodiversity action plan:** Develop a biodiversity action plan that outlines specific actions, targets, and timelines for enhancing biodiversity within and around business operations.

**Monitor and report:** Establish systems to regularly assess and report on biodiversity impacts and progress. This includes tracking the effectiveness of implemented strategies and making necessary adjustments based on findings.

## 5 Promote collaborative efforts

**Engage stakeholders:** Collaborate with local communities, environmental organisations, and other businesses to support biodiversity initiatives. This can involve joint projects, community outreach, and sharing best practices.

**Foster partnerships:** Form partnerships with NGOs and governmental bodies to enhance biodiversity conservation efforts. Working with external experts can provide additional resources and knowledge to support biodiversity goals.



## About BAM

BAM works in partnership with public and private sector clients across the UK and Ireland to develop, design, build, and maintain infrastructure and buildings which make a real difference to people's lives. We are part of Royal BAM Group, one of the largest construction companies in Europe.

For almost 150 years, we have been shaping the UK and Ireland's vital infrastructure and creating many of the country's most iconic buildings. We create sustainable environments that enhance people's lives.

Learn more about BAM UK and Ireland by visiting our [dedicated website](#).

### **BAM's commitment to Biodiversity**

Biodiversity is one of the cornerstones of our sustainability strategy. Recognising the significant impact that human activities, including those within the construction industry, have on the natural world, BAM are committed to preserving and enhancing biodiversity across all our work. Our proactive and comprehensive approach focuses on understanding our impacts, offering innovative solutions, and achieving a positive biodiversity impact. We're also proud that we were the first contractor to sign the Nature Positive Business Pledge, in 2023.