Natural capital

An overview of the Office for National Statistics and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs natural capital project and all related publications.

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1 . Overview

- UK natural capital is comprised of all the ecosystem services that UK natural assets provide; natural assets include soil, air, water and all living things.
- Accounting for natural capital is important as many of the most valuable services it provides are intangible, so they are often overlooked; therefore, prior to creating natural capital accounts, decisions can frequently be made without best representing the environment.
- We are constantly expanding and developing our work to stay on path with our 2020 roadmap; we welcome all those with expertise in any area of future work to email us at natural.capital.team@ons.gov.uk.

2 . Publications

Roadmaps

2022 roadmap
Article | Released 31 August 2022
This article assesses achievements since the publication of the natural capital roadmap, outlines various challenges, and sets out priorities for the next phase.

2020 roadmap
Article | Released 12 July 2018
This review and revised roadmap offers an introduction to natural capital accounting in the UK, assesses achievements in the three years since the last review, outlines various challenges, and sets out priorities for the next and final phase of the roadmap.

2015 roadmap
Article | Released 20 March 2015
This article assesses achievements since the publication of the natural capital roadmap, outlines various challenges, and sets out priorities for the next phase.

2012 roadmap
Article | Released December 2012
A roadmap for the development of natural capital accounts within the UK Environmental Accounts.

Natural capital monetary estimates

UK natural capital accounts: 2025
Bulletin | Released 5 December 2025
Estimates of the economic and social value of natural resources to the UK's economy and people.

UK natural capital accounts quality and methods guide
Methodology | Released 5 December 2025
What the UK natural capital accounts cover, how we produce them, and their quality and comparability. Includes definitions and latest, past and upcoming changes.

UK natural capital accounts: 2024
Bulletin | Released 8 November 2024
Estimates of the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK.

UK natural capital accounts: 2023
Bulletin | Released 27 November 2023
Estimates of the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK.

Scotland natural capital accounts: 2023
Bulletin | Released 15 June 2023
Estimates the value of Scottish natural capital and its beneficial effects for the population.

England natural capital accounts: 2023
Bulletin | Released 25 January 2023
Estimates the value of English natural capital and its beneficial effects for the population.

UK natural capital accounts: 2022
Bulletin | Released 10 November 2022
Estimates of the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK.

UK natural capital accounts: 2021
Bulletin | Released 12 November 2021
Estimates of the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK.

UK natural capital accounts: 2020
Bulletin | Released 19 November 2020
Estimates of the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK.

Scottish natural capital accounts: 2020
Article | Released 27 March 2020
The Scottish natural capital ecosystem service accounts, highlighting the relative importance of services provided by Scottish natural assets. Natural capital refers to physical and natural resources and the benefits these provide.

UK natural capital accounts: 2019
Bulletin | Released 18 October 2019
Estimates of the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK.

Scottish natural capital: Ecosystem Service Accounts, 2019
Bulletin | Released 22 March 2019
The Scottish natural capital Ecosystem Service Accounts, highlighting the value and benefits of Scotland's natural assets. These are Experimental Statistics.

UK natural capital: Ecosystem service accounts, 1997 to 2015
Bulletin | Released 30 January 2018
Natural capital refers to the physical, natural resources and the benefits that these resources provide. This bulletin presents the UK natural capital ecosystem service accounts, aiming to highlight the relative importance of services provided by the UK's natural assets.

UK natural capital: monetary estimates, 2016
Bulletin | Released 30 November 2016
Natural assets provide a wide range of environmental services that make human life possible. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) have been developing methods to value these services, aiming to highlight the relative importance of services provided by the UK's natural assets. This bulletin contains a snapshot of our progress.

UK natural capital, monetary estimates: 2014
Bulletin | Released 2 May 2014
First attempt by the ONS to expand on existing approaches to estimate a monetary value for components of UK natural capital for the period of 2007 to 2011.

Habitat accounts

Enclosed farmland natural capital accounts, UK: 2026
Bulletin | Released 8 July 2026
Natural capital accounts including estimates of the economic and social value of enclosed farmland natural resources to people in the UK.

Woodland natural capital accounts, UK: summary tables, 2026
Dataset | Released 26 February 2026
Detailed data breakdown of financial and societal value of woodland natural resources in the UK.

Marine and coastal margins natural capital accounts, UK: 2025
Bulletin | Released 8 August 2025
Natural capital accounts estimating the extent, condition, and annual and asset value of biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) ecosystem services for marine and coastal margins habitats in the UK.

Woodland natural capital accounts, UK: summary tables, 2025
Dataset | Released 14 February 2025
Detailed data breakdown of financial and societal value of woodland natural resources in the UK.

Woodland natural capital accounts, UK: 2024
Bulletin | Released 15 May 2024
Natural capital accounts containing information on the extent, condition and ecosystem services for woodlands in the UK.

Urban natural capital accounts, UK: 2023
Bulletin | Released 7 September 2023
Natural capital accounts estimate habitat extent, condition indicators, ecosystem services and asset value of urban areas in the UK.

Woodland natural capital accounts: 2022
Bulletin | Released 15 December 2022
Natural capital accounts containing information on ecosystem services for woodlands in the UK.

Saltmarsh flood mitigation in England and Wales, natural capital: 2022
Bulletin | Released 15 July 2022
This data estimates the impact saltmarsh has on reducing flood risk in coastal areas in England and Wales.

Habitat extent and condition, natural capital, UK: 2022
Bulletin | Released 3 May 2022
The size of area and condition indicators for eight natural UK habitats, including woodland, enclosed farmland, semi-natural grasslands and coastal margins. Uses the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting framework for Ecosystem Accounting. Experimental estimates.

Woodland natural capital accounts: ecosystem services for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: 2020
Bulletin | Released 11 May 2021
Additional information splitting down UK data in the Woodland natural capital accounts, UK: 2020 publication for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Marine accounts, natural capital, UK: 2021
Bulletin | Released 6 April 2021
Natural capital accounts containing information on ecosystem services for marine and coastal areas in the UK.

Semi-natural habitat natural capital accounts, UK: 2021
Bulletin | Released 10 February 2021
Exploring the size, condition, quantity and value of semi-natural habitats and ecosystem services, as part of the UK Natural Capital accounts. These are our most natural spaces, although they have been altered by human activity.

Woodland natural capital accounts, UK: 2020
Bulletin | Released 28 February 2020
Natural capital accounts containing information on ecosystem services for woodlands in the UK.

UK natural capital: urban accounts
Bulletin | Released 8 August 2019
Natural capital accounts containing information about green space in urban areas.

[UK natural capital: mountains, moorland and heath accounts]
Bulletin | Released 22 July 2019
Ecosystem accounts for the mountains, moorlands and heath (MMH) environment in the UK. This is the first iteration of the MMH ecosystem account.

[UK natural capital: ecosystem accounts for urban areas]
Bulletin | Released 12 July 2018
Initial natural capital accounts containing information about green space in urban areas.

[UK natural capital: ecosystem accounts for freshwater, farmland and woodland]
Bulletin | Released 25 July 2017
Natural capital accounts for freshwater, farmland and woodland have been developed with categories not previously included. Methodology is experimental and some services are not currently measured.

Cross-cutting accounts

Impact of hot days on productivity in Great Britain methodology
Methodology | Released 15 May 2024
Models estimates of output lost in gross value added (GVA) from the impact of hot days (28 degrees Celsius and over) on labour productivity in Great Britain.

Developing estimates of depletion for the UK natural capital accounts: 2024
Article | Released 7 March 2024

Developing methods to estimate the depletion of UK natural capital assets, with initial results for three non-renewable services. These are official statistics in development.

Health benefits from recreation, natural capital, UK: 2022
Bulletin | Released 27 May 2022
Further development of the UK recreation natural capital ecosystem service accounts, including specific methods used to estimate the health benefits gained from nature-based recreational activities.

Tourism and outdoor leisure accounts, natural capital, UK: 2021
Bulletin | Released 28 April 2021
In this bulletin we put into practice new methods for estimating the value of tourism and outdoor leisure in the UK.

Does exposure to air pollution increase the risk of dying from the coronavirus (COVID-19)?
Article | 13 August 2020
Our analysis measures the link between long-term exposure to dirty air and COVID-19 deaths in England.

One in eight British households has no garden
Article | 14 May 2020
The percentage of homes without a garden is higher among ethnic minorities, with Black people in England nearly four times as likely as White people to have no outdoor space at home.

Valuing green spaces in urban areas: a hedonic price approach using machine learning techniques
Article | Released 14 October 2019
Estimation of the value of recreational and aesthetic services provided by green and blue spaces in urban areas in Great Britain, capitalised into property prices.

UK natural capital: peatlands
Bulletin | Released 22 July 2019
Natural capital accounts for peatlands measures the ecosystem services which nature provides from this dramatic landscape, including water, carbon sequestration, food and recreation.

UK air pollution removal: how much pollution does vegetation remove in your area?
Article | Released 30 July 2018
Explore how air pollution removal varies across the UK and use our interactive map to see how much pollution was removed from your area in 2015.

UK natural capital: Experimental carbon stock accounts, preliminary estimates
Bulletin | Released 28 June 2016
The first experimental estimates of carbon stocks being compiled to support the incorporation of natural capital into the UK Environmental Accounts by 2020.

Developing ecosystem accounts for protected areas in England and Scotland
Report | Released September 2015
Project to scope and pilot ecosystem accounts for a selected suite of protected area landscapes that consist of a variety of habitats and produce multiple ecosystem services.

UK natural capital: land cover in the UK
Bulletin | Released 17 March 2015
Land cover ecosystem accounts for the UK. The initial land cover accounts, based on data from the Countryside Survey, show that the land cover changed significantly in the UK between 1998 and 2007.

Land use in the UK (PDF, 527KB)
Article | Released 2013
First experimental physical asset accounts for UK land use for 2000 to 2010.

Urban green spaces raise nearby house prices by an average of £2,500
Article | Released 14 October 2019
Urban properties close to public parks, gardens and playing fields are more expensive, analysis reveals.

The UK environment – fighting pollution, improving our health and saving us money
Article | Released 2 October 2017
An article looking at the findings from a new study commissioned by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggests that the environment is playing a vital role in tackling the problem of poor air quality and helping to protect people's health and reduce spending on healthcare.

Scoping studies

UK natural capital: developing semi-natural grassland ecosystem accounts
Article | Released 19 April 2018
A discussion of semi-natural grassland ecosystem accounts, including available data sources, and recommended approaches to developing an initial account.

Developing urban natural capital accounts for the UK as part of the ONS–Defra 2020 roadmap
Report | Released October 2017
Project to scope and produce as far as possible an outline natural capital account for the urban "broad habitat" across the UK.

UK natural capital: developing UK mountain, moorland and heathland ecosystem accounts
Article | Released 21 July 2017
A discussion of mountain, moorland and heathland ecosystem accounting techniques and data sources and the recommended approach to developing an initial account.

Scoping UK coastal margin ecosystem accounts
Article | Released 28 June 2016
Scopes the development of a coastal margins ecosystem account and discusses several methodological challenges arising from the unique characteristics of coastal margin habitats.

Development of a monitoring protocol and financial modelling to enable quantification and valuation of carbon impacts of peatland restoration
Report | Released March 2015
Research to support the quantification and valuation of carbon-based peatland restoration to facilitate business investment through the new UK Peatland Code.

Developing natural capital accounts for woodlands and the marine environment
Report | Released September 2014
Experimental national ecosystem accounts, which capture the benefits of nature in the nation's balance sheet in a way that is as consistent as possible with System of Environmental–Economic Accounting (SEEA) guidance on ecosystem accounting, over the period 2013 to 2015.

Methodology articles

UK natural capital accounts quality and methods guide
Methodology | Released 30 April 2025
Quality and methodology information for our UK natural capital accounts, detailing the strengths and limitations of the data, methods used, and data uses and users.

Principles of UK natural capital accounting: 2023
Methodology | Released 1 June 2023
The challenges and principles we have developed to transform the United Nation's guidance on environmental accounting into the UK's natural capital accounts.

Developing supply and use tables for UK natural capital accounts: 2023
Article | Released 21 March 2023
How we developed supply and use tables for UK natural capital accounts, which contain experimental estimates of the flow of goods and services generated by nature through the economy.

Tourism values for Natural Capital Accounts
Report | Released September 2019
A transparent and repeatable method for, and estimates of, the contribution of different ecosystems to the output of the tourist and outdoor leisure sectors in the UK as part of the UK natural capital accounts.

Marine Natural Capital Accounts
Report | Released June 2019
Provides economic accounts based on the valuation of the goods and benefits provided by marine and coastal natural capital and ecosystem services.

Scoping UK urban natural capital accounts – extending noise regulation estimates
Report | Released July 2018
A study to extend the existing analysis of noise regulating benefits of natural capital in urban areas to cover (if possible) the entire UK.

Scoping UK urban natural capital accounts – Extension to develop temperature regulation estimates
Report | Released June 2018
A study to extend the existing analysis of local climate regulation benefits of natural capital to cover the entire UK.

Principles of Natural Capital Accounting
Article | Released 24 February 2017
A background paper for those wanting to understand the concepts and methodology underlying the UK natural capital accounts being developed by the ONS and Defra.

Discounting for environmental accounts (PDF, 453KB)
Report | Released 30 November 2016
Guidance on social discounting for the purposes of natural capital accounting.

Valuing flood-regulation services for inclusion in the UK ecosystem accounts (PDF, 1.26MB)
Report | Released 30 November 2016
Methodology to value floodplains and an initial floodplain ecosystem account that could be incorporated into the UK ecosystem accounts.

Reviewing cultural services valuation methodology for inclusion in aggregate UK natural capital estimates (PDF, 1.22MB)
Report | Released 30 November 2016
Review of potential approaches that could be taken to value cultural ecosystem services (CES) for inclusion in the UK's ecosystem accounts.

Seminar notes

2013 Pimlico Seminar summary notes and supporting documents
Summary notes | Released 11 November 2013
Notes from an Expert Seminar in London in November 2013 to discuss practical valuation approaches for natural capital accounting in the UK.

Articles

UK air pollution removal: how much pollution does vegetation remove in your area?
Article | Released 30 July 2018
Explore how air pollution removal varies across the UK and use our interactive map to see how much pollution was removed from your area in 2015.

The UK environment – fighting pollution, improving our health and saving us money
Article | Released 2 October 2017
An article looking at the findings from a new study commissioned by the ONS suggests that the environment is playing a vital role in tackling the problem of poor air quality and helping to protect people's health and reduce spending on health care.

A million fewer people are gaining health benefits from nature since 2020
Article | Released 27 November 2023
People in the UK are spending less time in natural environments since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

3 . Importance of measuring natural capital

Natural assets provide a wide range of ecosystem services that make human life possible: the food we eat, the water we drink and the plant materials we use for fuel, building materials and medicines, to name a few. They also provide less visible services such as climate regulation, the natural flood defences provided by forests, removal of air pollutants by vegetation, and the pollination of crops by insects. Then, there is the inspiration we take from wildlife and the natural environment. Despite nature being priceless, it is not valueless.

We take a balanced approach to producing natural capital accounts, which entails creating stock and flow accounts of specific habitats or services. This means we are able to focus development on important accounts where the policy interest lies. All these specific accounts are then amalgamated into a national UK natural capital account that provides a "quick overview" of UK natural capital. The ultimate goal of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) project is to incorporate UK natural capital into the UK Environmental Accounts by 2020.

Natural capital is predominantly hidden, partial or missing from the nation's balance sheet. However, by providing valuations of the UK's natural capital, decision makers can better include the environment in their plans to allocate resources to develop, and promote the growth of, the economy.