

# MAKING DATA WORK FOR NATURE

2022 – 2027

The National Biodiversity Network Trust's Strategy

**NBN Trust**

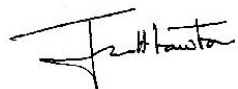
Making data work for nature



## Foreword

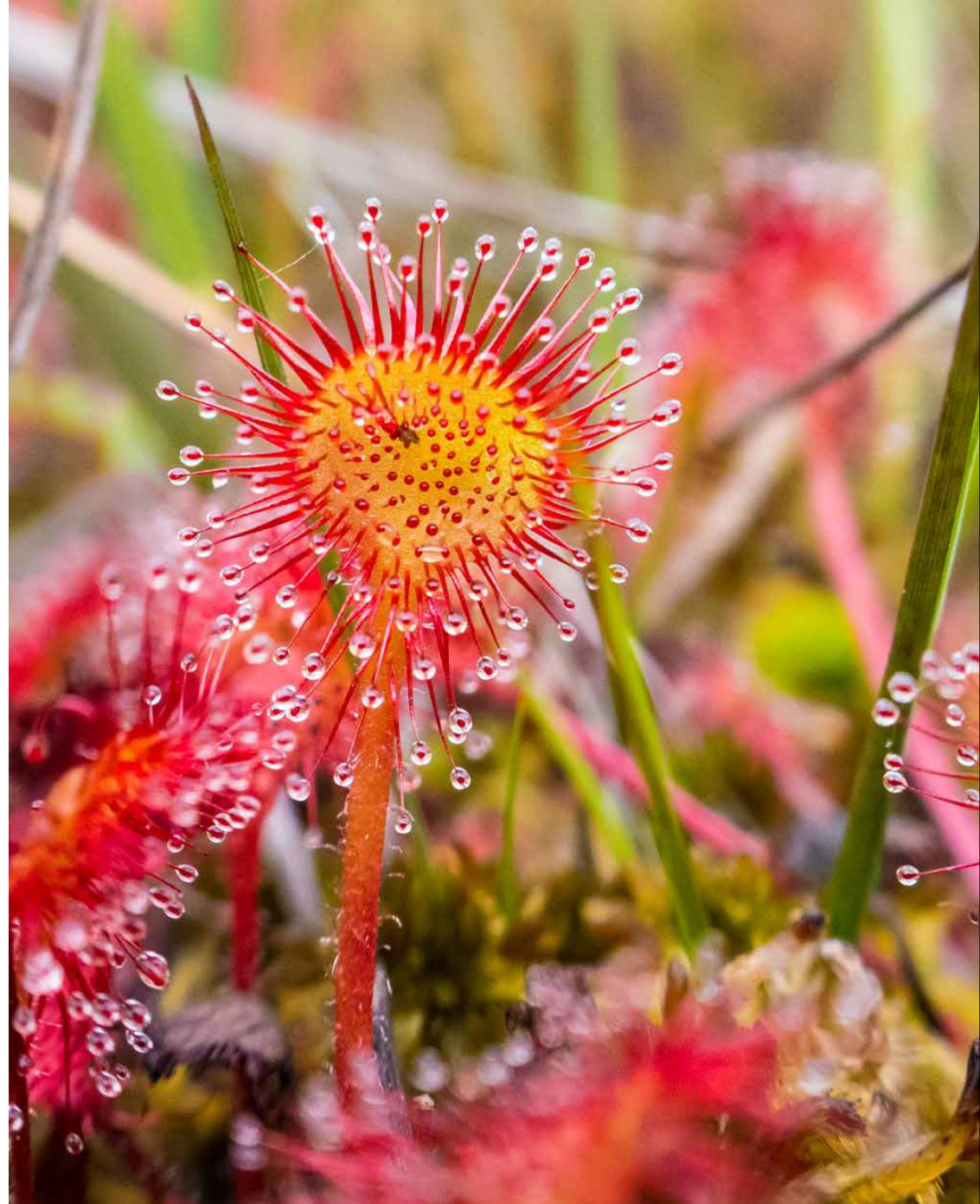
2022 is the start of a new era for nature conservation. The Environment Act 2021 and other new laws and policies across the UK are creating important opportunities to tackle the twin climate and nature emergencies. More than ever before, public bodies, NGOs and businesses are collaborating to protect and restore nature. The success of all these initiatives will depend upon access to high-quality biodiversity data, to plan and measure their progress. And that's where the National Biodiversity Network Trust, with its mission of making data work for nature, has a distinctive role to play.

**Professor Sir John Lawton CBE, FRS**, NBN Trust Patron



We're excited to share our new strategy, which launches the NBN Trust into its third decade. We have big plans and we face many challenges but, importantly, we won't be alone. Partnering with our nationwide network of more than 200 conservation charities, agencies, businesses and recording groups, we will make a unique contribution to nature's recovery. We'd love you to join us in our mission.

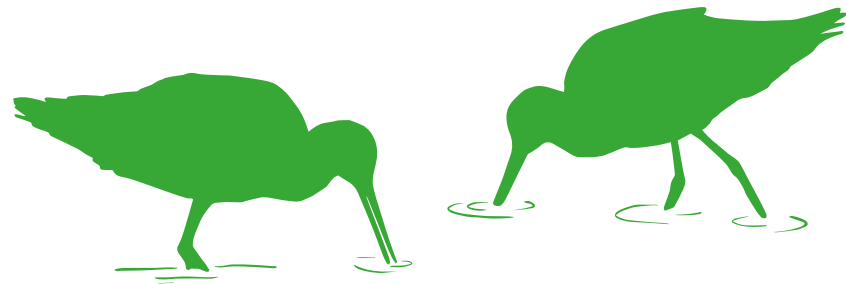
**Lisa Chilton**, NBN Trust CEO



## Our vision

Nature thriving everywhere,  
in all its diversity.

We passionately believe that, together, we can reverse the biodiversity crisis. Our sights are set on a future in which the natural world has bounced back to health. In which nature is sharing with us its many gifts – from clean air and water to food and flood-prevention. And in which wildlife is bringing joy, hope and inspiration to our daily lives.



## Our mission

Making data work  
for nature.

We provide vital evidence for nature's recovery.  
We build partnerships to meet the needs of those who require biodiversity data – for policies, planning, research and conservation – and to connect people and communities with nature.







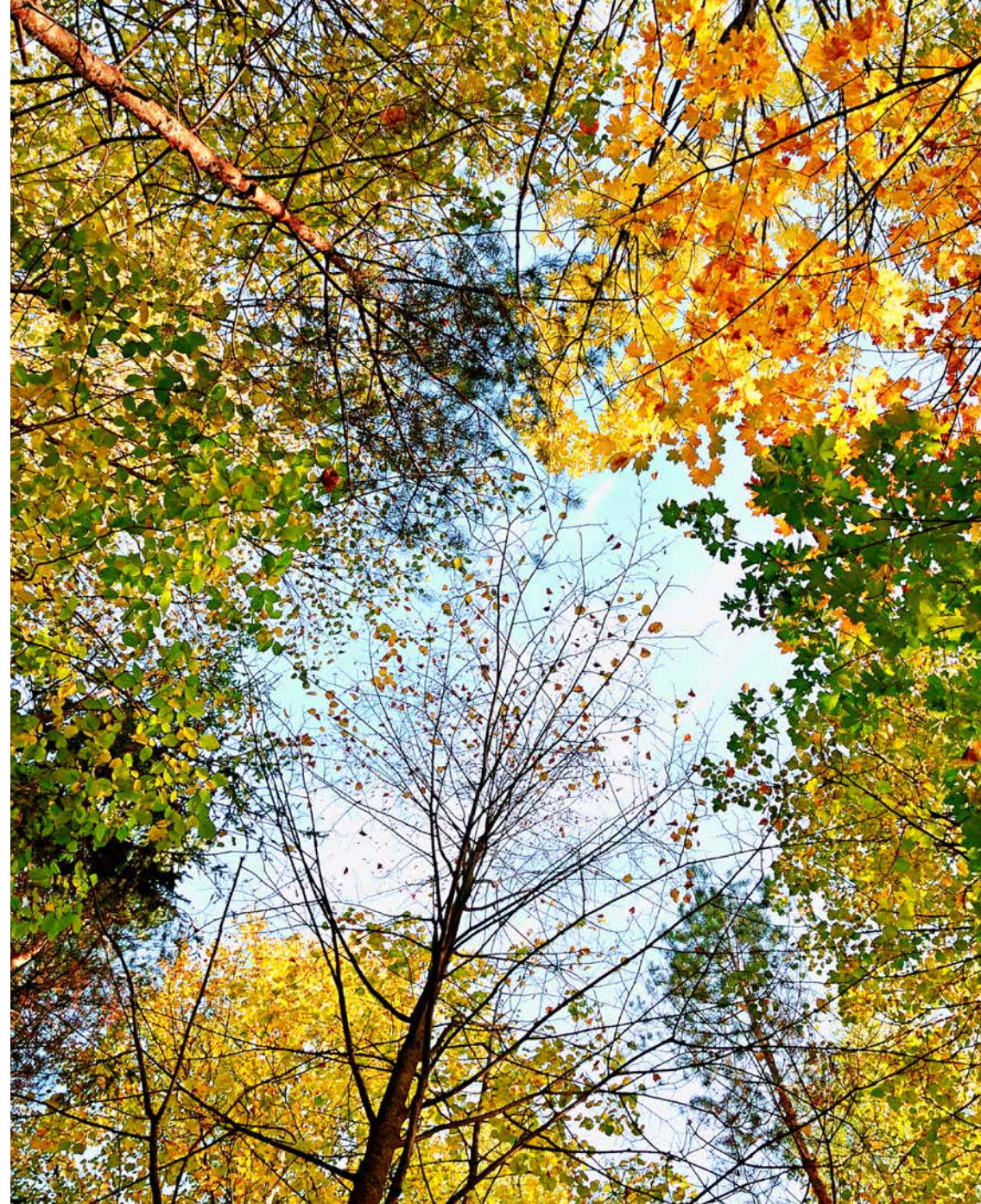
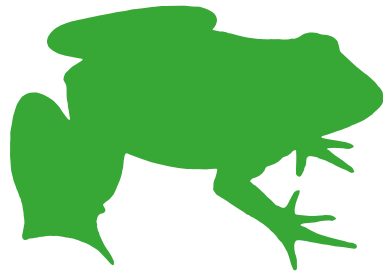
“ We **need** biodiversity.  
We need it to inspire and  
uplift us, and we need it  
to combat climate change  
and provide the life support  
systems that make life on  
Earth possible. ”





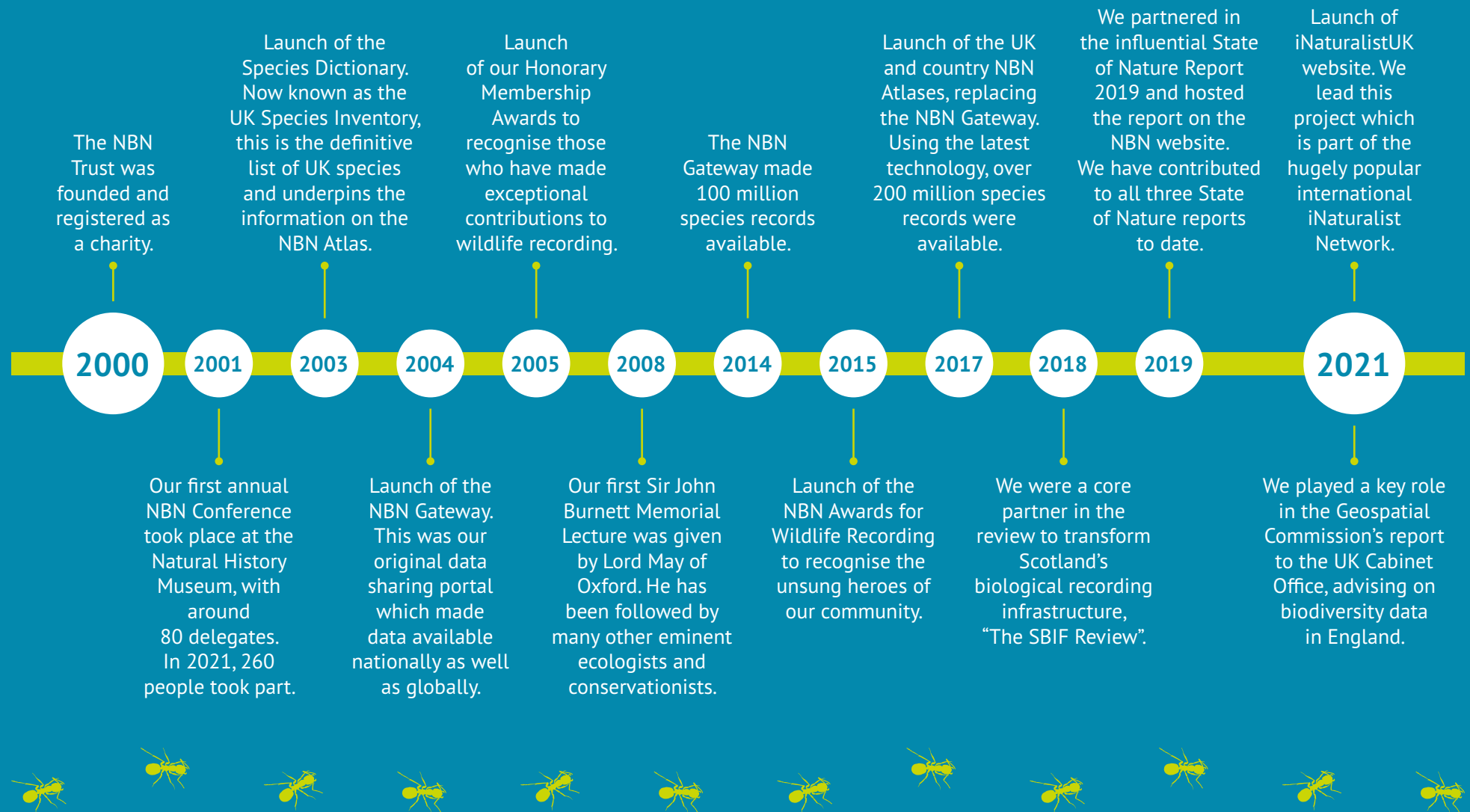
# What is the National Biodiversity Network Trust?

We're a small charity with a big plan – to make data work for nature. For more than twenty years we've been making biodiversity data accessible, to support better decisions about the natural world and to connect people with nature. But there's so much more to do – and the urgency is greater than ever. It's estimated that as little as 50% of existing biodiversity data is available to those who need it. If, together, we're to succeed in reversing the collapse of biodiversity, our decisions must be based on the most complete and highest-quality evidence. This is where the NBN Trust, our network and our members can truly make a difference.





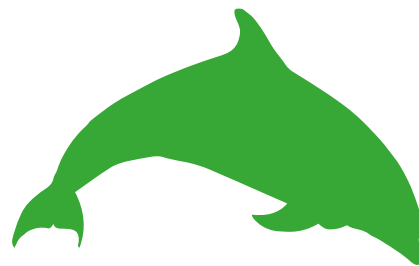
## Highlights from 20 years of the NBN Trust



# What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of living things. It's the range of plants, animals, fungi and other kinds of life that make up the natural world. In the UK, there are an estimated 70,000 different species – from tiny bugs to towering trees – and each plays its part in the intricate web of life.

We need biodiversity. We need it to inspire and uplift us, and we need it to combat climate change and provide the life support systems that make life on Earth possible. The insects that pollinate our food crops. The wetlands that absorb rainwater and prevent urban flooding. The peat bogs and seagrass beds that lock away carbon. And the sea sponges and countless other creatures that hold the key to the medicines of the future.



# What is biodiversity data and why is it important?

Biodiversity data (also known as 'biological records') is information about what species are found where. In its simplest form, it's a single record: for example, that you spotted a hedgehog in your garden on a particular date. By itself, it might be interesting – it might even have made your day – but it's probably not going to change the world. Together though, hundreds or even thousands of records of hedgehogs can tell us a great deal about how hedgehogs are faring and give us the evidence we need to protect them and help them thrive. In fact, such evidence is essential for nature's recovery. Every day, in every part of the UK, biodiversity data is helping answer vital questions. Researchers investigating the spread of non-native wildlife. Conservationists selecting the best locations for protecting a rare species. Planners deciding whether or not to approve a new housing development. Each of these, and many more besides, depend on good biodiversity data.



# Why now?

In 2021 the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP26, shone a light on the biodiversity and climate emergencies as never before. UK leaders joined their counterparts from around the world to pledge urgent action.

The UK has signed the [Leaders' Pledge for Nature](#), which commits to reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. In 2021 the four nations of the UK published a joint manifesto, the [Nature Positive 2030](#) report, which supports the same goal. But none of these words will mean anything if they're not followed up by urgent and concerted action. We have only a few years to bring about the changes that are needed to address the global and UK crises. The NBN Trust is committed to helping make this happen.





# Why do we need to 'make data work for nature'?



To understand the importance and urgency of the NBN Trust's mission, you need to know two facts. First, the UK has lost more of its nature than almost any other country in the world. But second, there's a remarkable community of organisations and volunteers across the UK who collect the data that's needed to help nature recover.

At the risk of oversimplifying it, *the UK has least wildlife but the most wildlife data*. The NBN Trust exists to harness that wealth of knowledge to support nature's recovery. We are a bridge between those who *gather* biodiversity data and those who *need* high-quality data to plan, manage and measure changes to the environment and to connect people with the natural world.



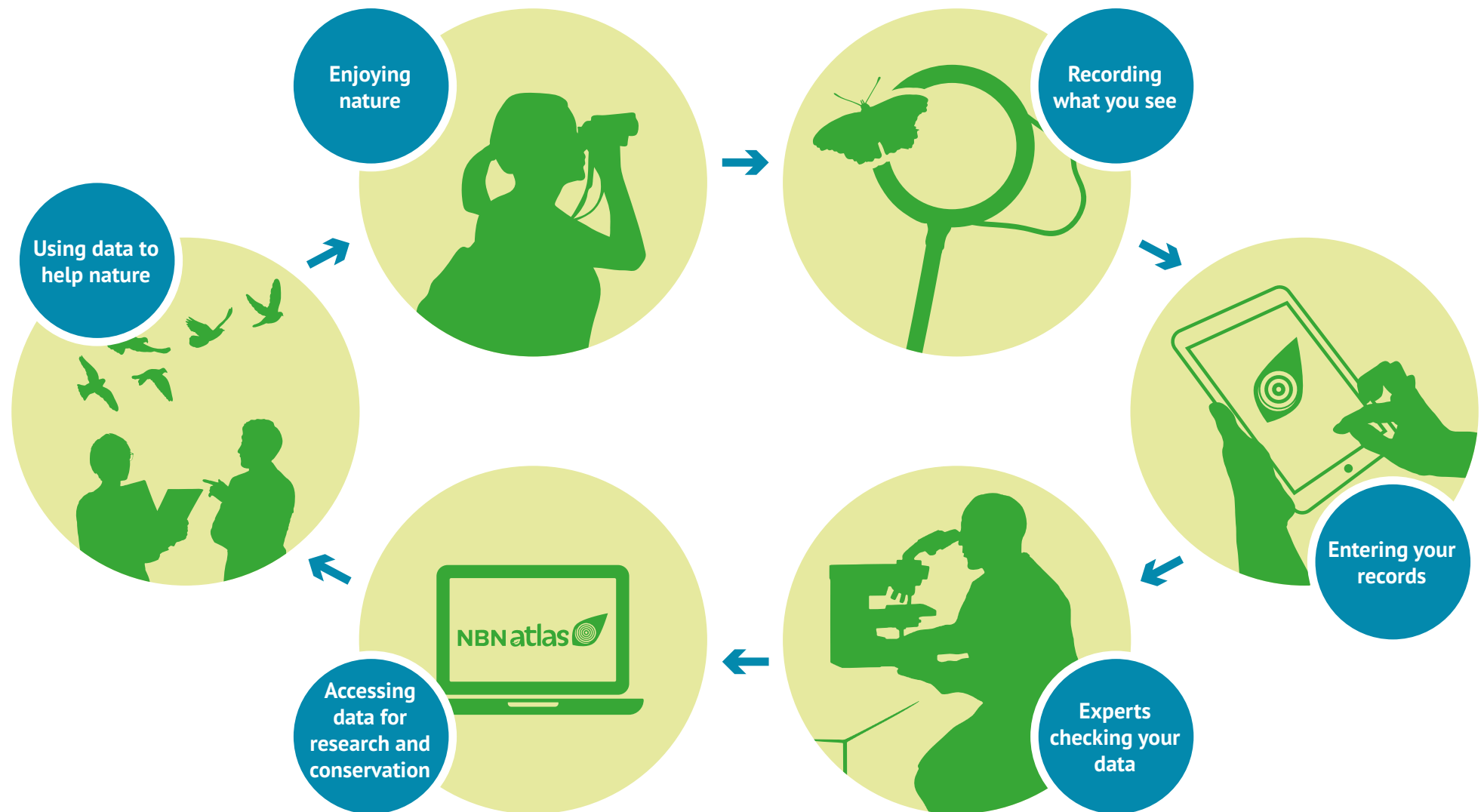
Society has created the biodiversity crisis, yet the information needed to tackle the crisis is often inaccessible. Without the NBN Trust, much of the UK's biodiversity data would remain unseen, unknown and unused. But we don't work alone. Partnership is central to our mission, and we connect more than 200 organisations, large and small, through our National Biodiversity Network: a dedicated community of people passionate about wildlife data. Working together, we create a vast flow of data carrying the evidence needed to protect and restore biodiversity, and the stories to inspire wonder and commitment.

At the heart of this flow is the [NBN Atlas](#), our data portal. The NBN Atlas is the UK's largest repository of publicly available biodiversity data, with more than 200 million records of over 46,000 UK species. This is a vital resource for those who wish to understand and protect nature.

Our mission over the next five years is to do even more to increase the volume, quality, accessibility, and impact of biodiversity data. To make sure that every record can play its part in restoring nature.

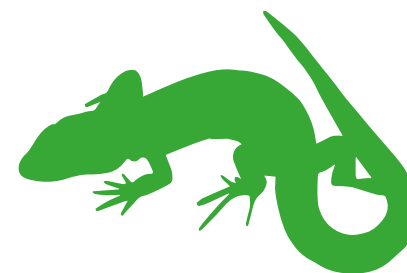


## Making your data work for nature





“ Anyone can record biodiversity data. Most of the tens of thousands of recorders around the UK are volunteers. You could even start today.”







*“ Our mission over the next five years is to do even more to increase the volume, quality, accessibility, and impact of biodiversity data. To make sure that every record can play its part in restoring nature. ”*

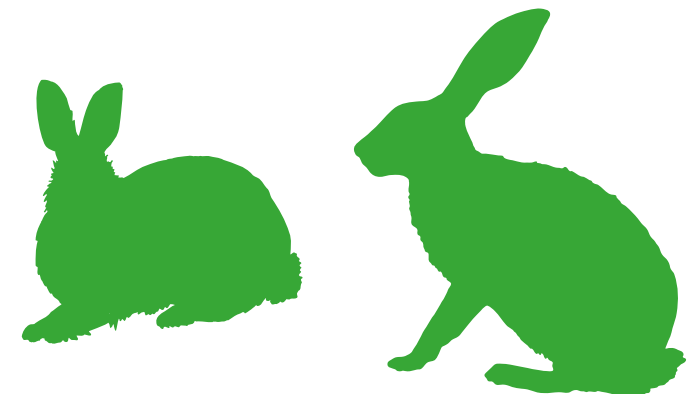


## Our ambitions

1. The NBN Atlas is the 'go to' place for sharing, finding and accessing UK biodiversity data.
2. Biodiversity data is providing the evidence needed for nature's recovery.
3. Citizen science is valued, supported and expanded as a major source of biodiversity data.
4. The National Biodiversity Network is a well-connected and highly collaborative community with a united voice on key issues.

## Our commitments to sustainability

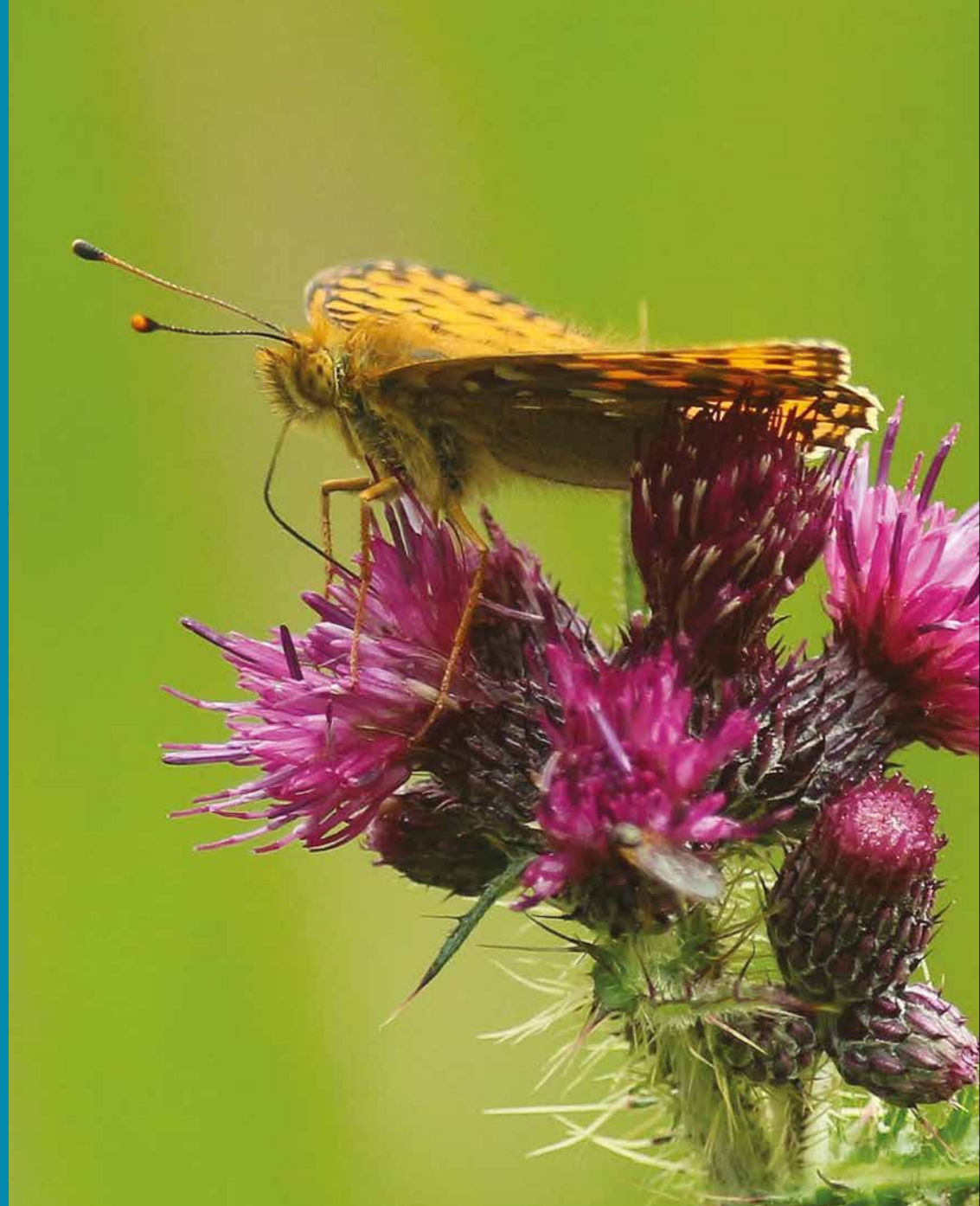
- Financial – Securing the future of the NBN Trust by growing and diversifying our income streams.
- Social – Helping to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion in the biodiversity data sector. Prioritising wellbeing and ensuring the Trust is a great place to work.
- Environmental – Minimising the Trust's environmental impacts and working towards Net Zero for carbon.



## Ambition 1

The NBN Atlas is the 'go to' place for sharing, finding and accessing UK biodiversity data.

Since the NBN Trust was founded, we've harnessed technology to make biodiversity data accessible to all. Our NBN Atlas, launched in 2017, has become one of the world's largest online sources of biodiversity data. It is accessed by more than 11,000 registered users who, between them, download more than half a billion records a year. The NBN Atlas is a veritable treasure-trove of wildlife information, and an outstanding source of evidence for academic research and for informed decisions about the natural environment. But it still has huge untapped potential, both for existing users and to engage new users. We aim to make the NBN Atlas the very best it can be, a world-class tool for sharing and accessing biodiversity data. The next decade will see 'big data' transforming approaches to measuring and monitoring biodiversity – from eDNA to data from satellites and drones – and we will help ensure that the data from these sources is accessible and useable.





## We will:

- Strive for all suitable data to be shared via the NBN Atlas, and work with data providers to remove barriers and ease data-sharing, for example by introducing access controls.
- Partner with museums and botanic gardens in a major project to enable them to share digitised records from their natural history collections.
- Collaborate with others to explore the opportunities for integrating new sources of data into the NBN Atlas, including data from remote sensing and eDNA.
- Plan and deliver a programme of enhancements and training resources that make the NBN Atlas easier to use and create new functionality in key areas.
- Connect with those NBN Atlas user groups that are growing rapidly – including users in research, education and business – to identify and meet their needs.
- Refresh the NBN Atlas platform to ensure high performance and stability and enable us to incorporate the latest developments from the global community of [Living Atlases](#).



## Ambition 2

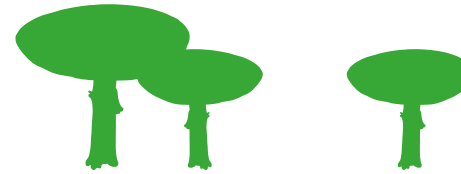
Biodiversity data is providing the evidence needed for nature's recovery.

The four nations of the UK have committed to halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. New laws, policies and strategies are emerging to achieve that goal, including England's Environment Act 2021 and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Novel approaches are being developed to restore nature in protected areas, farmland, the wider countryside and urban areas, and new partnerships are forming. We aim to position biodiversity data at the heart of these initiatives, making sure that efficient and effective flows of data are providing the evidence that's needed to plan, deliver and monitor them.



## We will:

- Deliver the Better Biodiversity Data Project, funded by the Scottish Government and NatureScot, to take forward recommendations from the Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum.
- Work with Natural England and other NBN partners to deliver key recommendations from the 2021 Geospatial Commission Report and Defra's Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme.
- Partner with Natural Resources Wales, the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Environmental Records Centres to deliver high-quality biodiversity data for the State of Natural Resources Report and other uses, including advanced modelling of species' distribution.
- Collaborate with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording to provide robust species data for the Northern Ireland Priority Species Review, the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme and other major initiatives.
- Work with our partners in the Isle of Man and Channel Islands to enhance the sharing, use and impact of biodiversity data.
- Promote and support the adoption of the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) data principles and a suite of data standards to aid the re-use of data.
- Strengthen the flow of data from the NBN Atlas, both to the local level to inform local decision making, and to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, for which the NBN Trust is the UK Node.

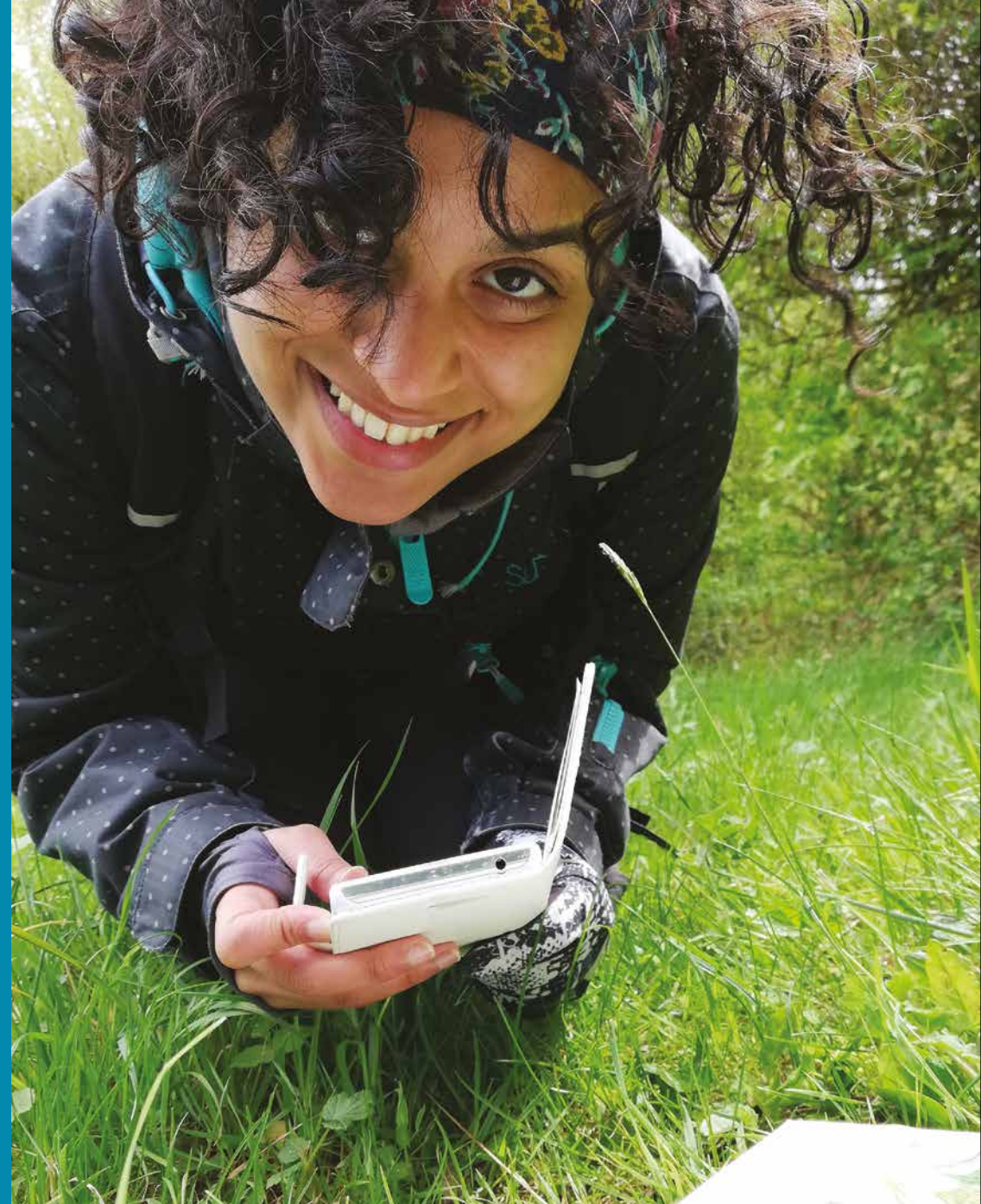




## Ambition 3

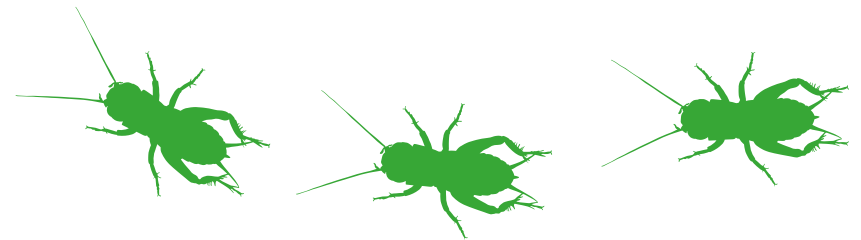
Citizen science is valued, supported and expanded as a major source of biodiversity data.

Though some of the UK's biodiversity data is collected by professional ecologists, most of it comes from a remarkable community of volunteer wildlife recorders, ranging from beginners to national experts in particular groups of species. The level of passion, skill and expertise within this community cannot be overestimated. For decades, concerns have been raised that the number of new recruits, and their progression to becoming experts who can check others' records, is insufficient to sustain this community and its vital work. However, there is much to be optimistic about. The value of data from citizen science (also known as community science) is increasingly recognised by governments and funders. Participation is growing, facilitated by apps and websites such as iNaturalistUK, iRecord and iSpot, and by high-profile projects such as the global City Nature Challenge. We will champion citizen science for biodiversity and help ensure it makes the greatest possible difference for nature.



## We will:

- Gain recognition and support for the biodiversity recording community through leadership, advocacy and communications.
- Demonstrate the impact, importance and value of citizen science for biodiversity.
- Create an online hub for biodiversity citizen science, making it easier for projects to find volunteers and vice versa.
- As the lead for iNaturalistUK, support the growing community of users and increase the volume, quality and impact of the records.
- Engage with the creators of new and emerging apps and other recording tools, and ensure they are integrated promptly into the UK biodiversity data pathways with appropriate verification of records.
- Engage with the NBN community to identify and deliver initiatives to help attract and retain new recorders from all backgrounds, and develop their skills, expertise and commitment for the long term. This includes addressing the critical shortage of expert recorders who are able to verify others' records.





## Ambition 4

The National Biodiversity Network is a well-connected and highly collaborative community with a united voice on key issues.

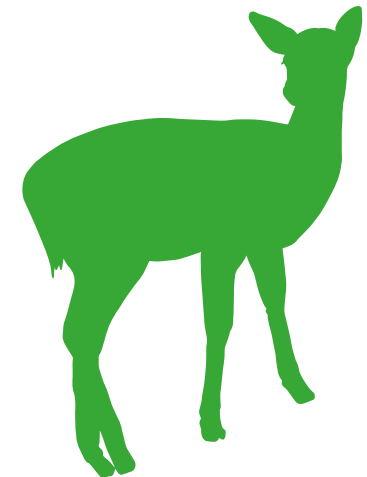
For 21 years, the NBN Trust has promoted effective communication and mutual learning within the Network and facilitated the sharing and utilisation of data. Right now, the legal and policy landscape in which we operate is changing, creating an even greater need for this facilitatory role. Partnership is more important than ever, and we aim to bring the Network closer, fostering greater collaboration for nature's recovery.





## We will:

- Expand the NBN, targeting gaps where specific sectors are currently under-represented or where there is greatest potential for collaboration (e.g. academia and education, museums and botanic gardens, Local Environmental Records Centres, and businesses that create and/or consume biodiversity data).
- Strengthen communication and engagement with and between members of the NBN community, bringing them together to share insights, build consensus and foster collaboration and co-creation.
- Facilitate professional development and promote best practice within the biodiversity data sector.
- Speak out for biodiversity data: championing its collection and use, highlighting the value of the NBN community, and advocating support for the costs of collecting, managing and sharing data.



## Our commitment to sustainability

We make the following commitments relating to financial, social and environmental sustainability. These commitments underpin every aspect of the strategy and are essential to its successful delivery.

### Financial

We can only achieve the ambitions set out in this strategy if the NBN Trust is financially secure and able to grow. To attain this, we will:

- Demonstrate our impact and value to existing and new funders.
- Create strong partnerships with Local Environmental Records Centres, and with other data providers and owners, to develop a commercial income stream.
- Revamp our membership scheme to provide value to our members and income for the Trust.

### Social

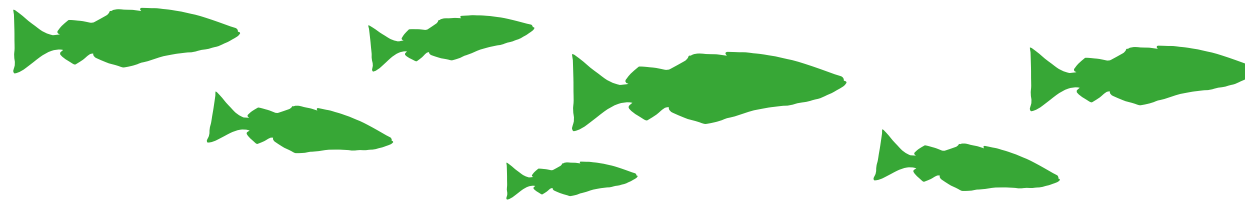
We take seriously our responsibilities to our staff and volunteers. We will:

- Prioritise staff and volunteer wellbeing and ensure that the NBN Trust is a great place to work.
- Strive to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion within our staff and Board.
- Showcase and promote diversity within the NBN community.

### Environmental

We are passionate about the environment and know we can do more to reduce our impact on the planet. We will:

- Audit the NBN Trust's environmental impact and take action to minimise it.
- Create a plan for the Trust to achieve Net Zero for carbon.





## Join us

We'd love you to join us in our mission to make data work for nature. You can join us by:



[Becoming a member of the NBN Trust](#)

[Sharing and accessing data on the NBN Atlas](#)

[Recording wildlife and sharing your data](#)

## Contact us

You can get in touch by email – [support@nbn.org.uk](mailto:support@nbn.org.uk) or phone – **0115 850 0177**.

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