



Office for
Environmental
Protection

APSE Conference

The OEP – Playing our part in improving the environment

Helen Venn, Chief Regulatory Officer

The role of the OEP

We protect and improve the environment, holding government and other public bodies to account

Independent arm's-length body working in England and Northern Ireland

Central to new system of national environmental governance established under the Environment Act 2021 alongside statutory targets, an environmental improvement plan, and environmental principles

OEP functions



Government context

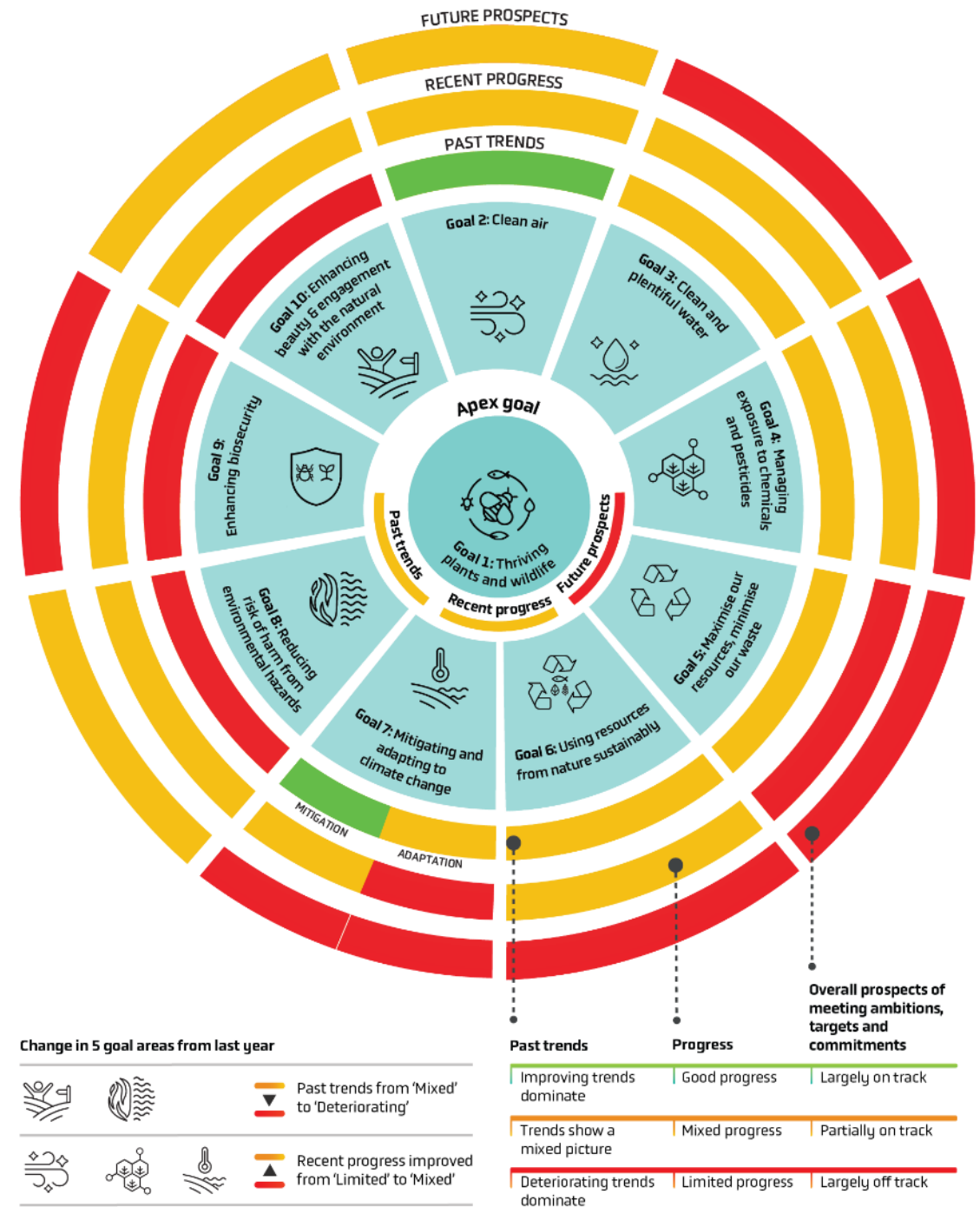
Government is committed to pursuing economic growth and to significantly improving the natural environment

EIP25: "Nature is not a blocker to growth; it enables, drives and protects it."

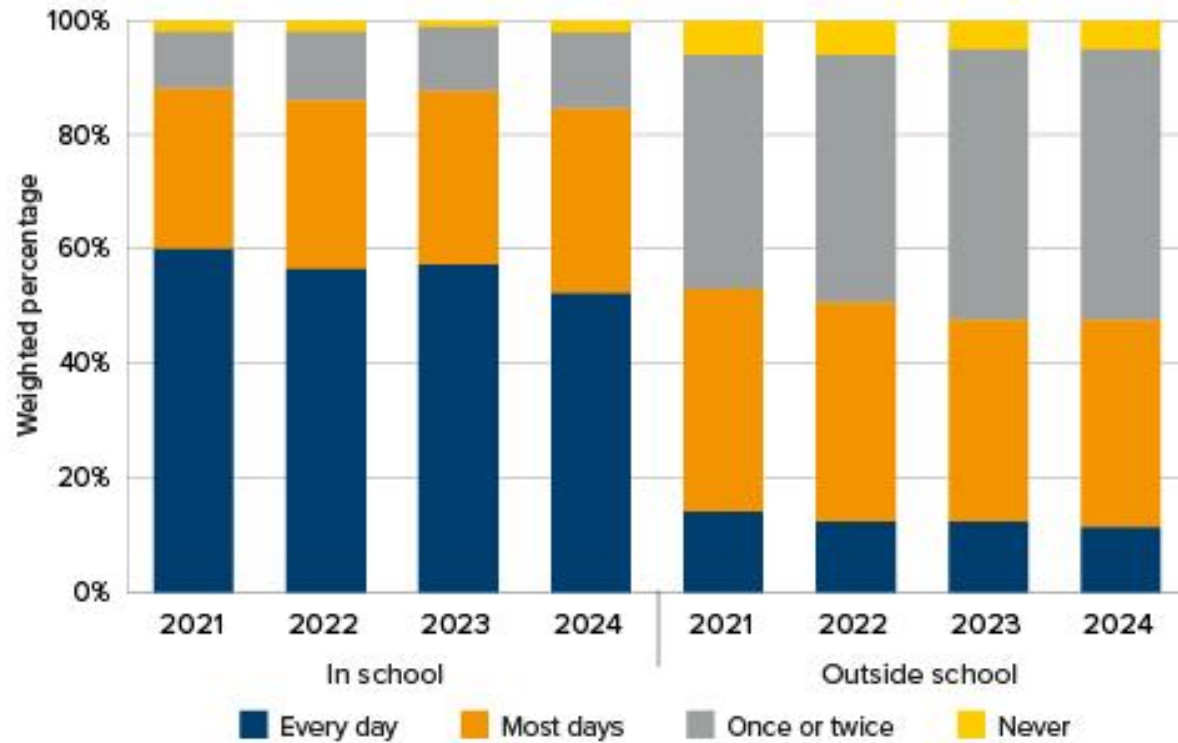


EIP progress report: the headlines

- More progress made in 24/25 than the previous year
- Not the step change needed
- Government remains largely off track to meet ambitions, targets and commitments

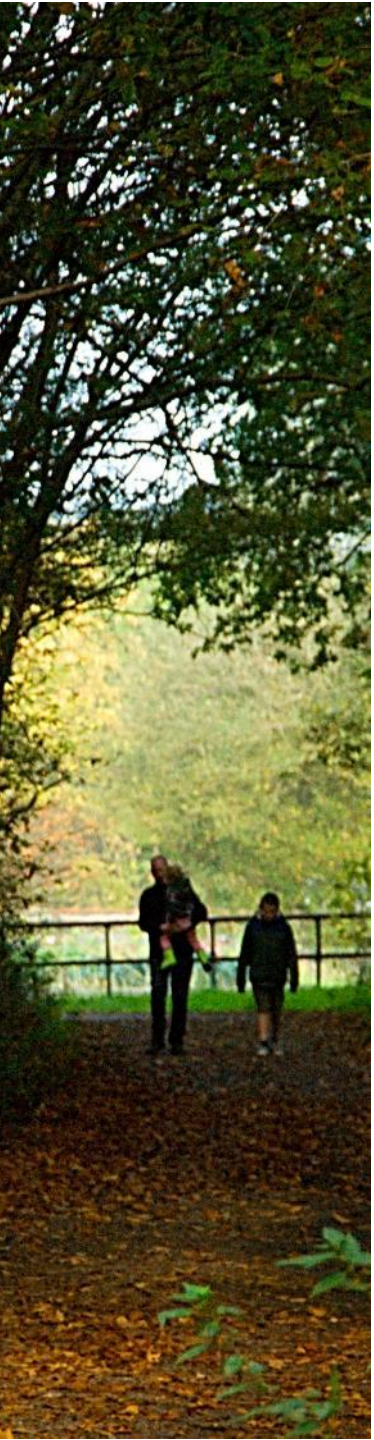


Engagement with nature

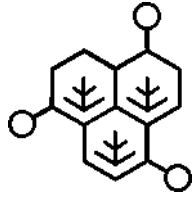


Children's engagement with the natural environment is decreasing and is very low compared to other countries

Frequency of time spent outside in the past week by children in school and outside of school from 2021 to 2024



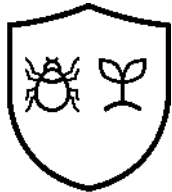
What is holding back progress?



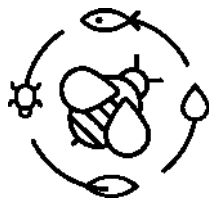
Key policies, strategies and regulatory frameworks are announced and anticipated but then not developed or delayed



Actions do not address all major pressures



Resources are not given as needed even when tools and actions are well understood



The urgency with which positive actions are being implemented is not enough



Recommendations

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- **Maximise the contribution of protected sites for nature**
- **Speed up action in the marine environment**
- **Set out clear mechanisms for reconciling competing demands for use of land and sea**
- **Develop a circular economy framework**



Recommendations - Enablers

- **Mobilise investment at the scale needed**
- **Regulate more effectively**
- **Harness support needed to achieve ambitions**

EIP25

- Improvement on EIP23 – more coherent, greater transparency, focus on delivery plans
- If delivered as intended, government's prospects of achieving its environmental obligations improved
- What matters now is effective implementation
The plan must be turned into action



ENGLAND'S PROTECTED SITES

A golden
opportunity
to drive nature's
recovery



RECOMMENDATIONS

15 actions. Improving sites.
Increasing efficiency.

Governance

1. Set legal targets
2. Make a plan for delivery
3. Ensure all public authorities do their bit

Resources

4. Work out what money and people are needed and make them available

Designation

5. Speed up and scale up designating new sites
6. Engage better with landowners

Monitoring

7. Create a new duty to monitor sites
8. Make sure monitoring supports outcomes
9. Give timely feedback to landowners

Land management

10. Encourage farmers with better agri-environment schemes
11. Ensure access to funding for other sites
12. Ensure access to better advice for all landowners

Regulation

13. Remove outdated and harmful consents
14. Enable Natural England to regulate for effective management
15. Monitor compliance

Local Nature Recovery Strategies



What is the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy aiming to achieve?



Investigations

- Regulation of CSOs
- Compliance with WFDs
- Emergency authorisations of neonicotinoid pesticides





An hourglass with red liquid inside, set against a sunset background with a bright sun and grass in the foreground. The hourglass is the central focus, with the red liquid filling the upper bulb. The background is a soft, warm sunset with a bright sun on the right side, creating a lens flare effect. The foreground is filled with green grass, slightly out of focus.

QUESTIONS?



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