

Glossary

Abstraction	The process of taking or extracting water from a natural source (rivers, lakes, groundwater etc.) for various uses such as providing drinking water, irrigation, and industrial use.
Acidification	A process by which the content of soil or chemical quality of water becomes more acidic over time due to natural processes or through the accumulation of pollutants.
Adaption and mitigation (in the context of climate change)	Adaptation is the process of adjusting to the current and future effects of climate change, whereas mitigation describes the effort to prevent or reduce carbon emissions to make the impacts of climate change less severe.
Agi-environment schemes	Government-funded programmes that support environmentally-friendly farming practices, such as habitat restoration, species conservation and sustainable land management.
Aquifer (and abstraction from)	Porous rock or sediment which is saturated with groundwater and from which such water is abstracted for use for drinking, irrigation or industry.
Biodiversity	Biodiversity, or ‘biological diversity’, is the variety of life on earth and is used to describe the diversity of life that exists within habitats at all scales.
Biome	A distinct geographical region of the world with specific climate and vegetation characteristics and a particular collection of animal species.
Biosecurity	Measures taken to prevent disease organisms entering or leaving a place.
Buffer zone (ecological)	An area surrounding a habitat or site of ecological importance that is managed to reduce external pressures and enhance ecological value.
Catchment / flashy catchment	The area of land from which water drains into a specified body of water e.g. the catchment of the River Avon. A flashy catchment is one that responds very quickly to periods of intense rainfall, with water levels rising and falling very rapidly, often causing serious localised flooding and disruption.
Citizen science	The involvement of local volunteers in science, often in the collection of data on habitats and species, to support work being carried out by scientific organisations.

Compaction (of soil)	Occurs when soil particles are pressed together, with the main effects being to reduce available oxygen and reduce rates of water infiltration and drainage.
Confluence	The place where one watercourse joins with another to form a larger stream / river.
Connectivity (ecological)	The degree to which different habitats are linked, allowing species to move, migrate and disperse across the landscape.
Degradation (of habitats)	A lowering of the quality and condition of a habitat over time due to factors such as pollution, invasive species or over-harvesting of natural resources.
Dingle woodlands	A small, wooded valley, often with a watercourse at the bottom. In the UK, such woodlands are often considered to be temperate rainforests.
Ecosystem services	The benefits that people obtain from a healthy natural environment, including food and water, climate regulation and flood mitigation, recreation, and nutrient cycling.
Ecotone	A transitional area where two habitats meet and graduate into one another e.g. where grassland and woodland meet and the ecotone area supports tussocky grassland and scrub before the habitat grades into woodland.
Eutrophication	Occurs when a habitat becomes enriched with nutrients, speeding up the growth of vegetation. In water environments this can lead to algal blooms and oxygen depletion. In terrestrial environments this can lead to a reduction in species diversity and decline in soil quality.
Floodplain	The area of low-lying ground next to a watercourse which becomes flooded when the stream or river bursts its banks. These areas should remain wet enough to support habitats such as marsh and reedbed, but many rivers today are hydrologically disconnected from their historic floodplains.
Fragmentation / fragmented habitats	Occurs when an area of habitat becomes broken into smaller and smaller pieces, reducing or removing the ability of species to move between them.
Geodiversity	The variety of rocks, minerals, natural landforms and soils that underlie and determine the character of our landscape and environment.
GIS (Geographical Information System)	Computer software that brings together maps and data for spatial analysis.
Green Belt	Identified within the town planning system as a buffer between built up areas and the countryside as a policy for controlling urban growth.

Habitat bank	An area of land identified for the creation and enhancement of habitat to satisfy requirements for the delivery of statutory Biodiversity Net Gain.
Habitat mosaic	A landscape composed of different habitat types in close proximity, supporting a wider range of species and ecological functions.
Headwaters	The geographical location where a watercourse begins, when surface run-off begins to form a recognisable channel.
INNS (Invasive Non-Native Species)	A species which has been introduced to a region of the world in which it does not occur naturally, and where it is able to expand its range and population to the detriment of naturally occurring species e.g. through the spread of disease organisms or by out-competing native species for food or habitat niches.
Integrated Pest Management (IPM)	An environmentally sensitive approach to pest control that combines biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools to minimise risks to people and nature.
Meta-population	A group of spatially separated populations of the same species which interact at some level, e.g. individuals migrating between populations for breeding.
Microplastics	Small particles of plastic with a diameter of 5mm or less, which are a significant source of environmental pollution. Most are the result of the breakdown of larger items such as plastic bags and packaging.
Migratory / migration	The movement of populations of species between one location and another, e.g. birds migrating from winter feeding areas to summer breeding areas.
Mitigation and adaption (in the context of climate change)	Mitigation describes the effort to prevent or reduce carbon emissions to make the impacts of climate change less severe, whereas adaptation is the process of adjusting to the current and future effects of climate change.
NFM (Natural Flood Management)	Working with nature to reduce the risk and the impact of flooding, using techniques to restore the natural functioning of rivers, streams and their associated wetland and floodplain habitats.
Nature-based solutions	The use of nature and natural processes to address environmental issues such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, water security or disaster risk reduction.
Non-native	A species that is not indigenous or native (found naturally) in a location.

Particulates (particulate matter)	Something composed of very small particles. Most frequently used in reference to air pollution, e.g. sooty particulates from vehicle exhausts.
Permeability	The ability of a substance to allow gases or liquids to pass through it, e.g. the permeability of different soil types to water.
Pollinator	An animal that moves pollen from one plant or flower to another. Most often insects, but birds and mammals can also act as pollinators.
Pollution (diffuse and point-source)	Diffuse pollution describes the release of potential pollutants from a range of activities and sources that cannot be pinpointed to specific locations, but where the cumulative impact is damaging to the habitat. Point-source pollution, in contrast, occurs at a specific, identifiable location.
Ramsar site	Sites designated under criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance. Named after the city of Ramsar, in Iran, where the Convention was signed in 1971.
Regenerative farming / regenerative agriculture	A holistic approach to farming / food production which seeks to balance productivity with the protection and restoration of the land and soils being farmed.
Reintroduction	The act of moving or releasing a species back to an area from which it has previously been lost.
Saline	Containing salt. Saline habitats have a higher natural salt content than others, e.g. saline pools or lagoons.
Soil organic matter	The part of the soil that consists of plant or animal material in varying stages of breakdown. Healthy soils have a higher organic matter content.
SPA (Special Protection Area)	An area designated under the EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.
Statutory guidance	Sets out the requirements or processes imposed by law for the carrying out or delivery of a particular activity.
Terrestrial habitat	Habitats found on land, such as woodland or grassland.
Veteran tree	A tree that is of exception age, size or condition, often with features such as hollow trunks, deadwood, or cavities that provide important habitat for wildlife.