



Plantlife

Strategy to 2030

For a world
rich in
plants
and
fungi





What do plants and
fungi do for us?

They shape our world



Plants are the foundation of life.

They use energy from sunlight to convert carbon dioxide from the air and water into food. This simple process, photosynthesis, provides the energy animals need and the oxygen we all breathe.

Plants are powerful. They make-up more than eighty percent of the Earth's biomass. Their capacity to store carbon can help to stabilise our warming world. We use plants every day, from the fabric of our clothes to the wood in our homes. Yet plants can still surprise. They grow in the night. They can intoxicate and kill. Plants transform our landscapes and produce life-saving medicines.

Then there are fungi and the intimate lives they share with plants. Fungi are a life-support system providing vital nutrients and a sub-terranean network by which plants communicate. We have barely begun to explore this mysterious kingdom...

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What do plants and
fungi do for us?

97%
of UK meadows
lost since the
1930s



From the weird to the wonderful, plants are life affirming. They can be as blissfully commonplace as the daisy, or as painfully shy as the rarest wild orchid. Their flowers make us smile. With scents that delight and colours that tingle, plants bring us joy. They can be exquisitely fragile yet opportunists too, forcing their way through the tiniest cracks in our concrete cities.

We've named them like poetry, these snake's head fritillaries, bee orchids and ragged robins. Plants slow us down, forcing us to heed the rhythms of nature. They signal the changing seasons. Some blossom so seldom that they demand patience.

Plants breathe fresh oxygen into our lungs. And we know that plants calm our minds, though we often forget. As we spend time in nature, plants can be the steadying influence we all need to tend to our wellbeing...

...yet everywhere, plants are under attack.

**Plants now need us as much as
we need them.**



Image: Jason Pochin



our Focus:

Plants in a time of crisis

Ian Dunn, CEO Plantlife

We face three urgent challenges in the coming decade: a climate crisis, alongside an ecological and societal one. We, humans, have put the planet on a path to a warmer world. We continue to destroy diversity in our plant and animal kingdoms and we don't even understand our fungal kingdom. Only three per cent of the UK's meadows survive compared with their area less than a century ago. We have lost our connection with nature and its power to sustain mental and physical wellbeing.

Plants are showing us the impact of a warming world and they are a warning that all is not well. Plants and fungi can also help us to put this right and, we can help them by restoring the habitats that were commonplace for generations before us.

Plantlife has a unique opportunity to encourage people everywhere to be part of the solution. We know how to protect, restore and strengthen species and habitats. By working in partnership with those who would re-wild our countryside, those who farm the land, those who are protecting our wonderful landscapes, building new homes and designing new cities, we can help to re-balance our world. We can help us all be part of the solution and we all need to be so.

Together we can re-build a healthy natural world and our relationship with it. This will be the focus of Plantlife's work in the coming decade. Plants and fungi are central to doing so.

**It's time to act:
for a world rich in
plants and fungi.**

**"Our focus in
this decade ahead
is to build resilient
ecosystems to support
lasting, positive
change in plant
conservation"**

Three crises co-exist

ecological
crisis

societal
crisis

plants and fungi
bring positive
change

climate
crisis



Plantlife

in a critical decade



The global response to the Covid-19 pandemic has shown what society is capable of when faced with a major disruptive threat. As existential threats, climate change and biodiversity loss are even more serious to humankind. They will make living on our planet ever more challenging to our populations and to us as individuals, unless we take radical action now. Plantlife is a cutting-edge, innovative conservation charity with a track record of success. Across arable farmland, heathland, coastal dunes, ancient woodlands, grasslands and wetlands, we are driving great gains for nature. From the open spaces of our nature reserves to the corridors of government, Plantlife works nationally and internationally to raise the profile of wild plants and fungi, to celebrate their beauty and to protect their future. Please join us in this greatest challenge of our times.

David Hill, Chair Plantlife

“From nature reserves to corridors of government, Plantlife works nationally and internationally to raise the profile of wild plants and fungi”



Our Mission: to secure a world rich in plants and fungi

Underpinning the health of our environment wild plants and fungi are the foundation upon which we can help resolve the climate, ecological and societal challenges we face.

In this strategy period Plantlife will:

- 1 Protect and restore** the diversity of wild plants and fungi to enhance our countryside, towns and cities.
- 2 Connect people with nature** to improve wellbeing and inspire action to save species and their habitats.
- 3 Work in partnerships** so that all people and all sectors of society can contribute to tackling the climate and nature crisis we face.
- 4 Collaborate and influence** on the world stage to empower societies across the globe to help protect plants and fungi.

Successful delivery of this strategy will lead to a world full of colour, beauty and life – from inner cities to our wildest places. Plants, and the animals that depend on them, will thrive and be connected in every way possible.



1

Protect, and restore

**the diversity of wild plants and fungi to
enhance our countryside, towns and cities.**

Plants are everywhere! As swathes of grasslands, on mountains, along coasts and in woodlands, on heathland, arable farmland and peatlands; in our towns and cities. Plantlife's projects span all of these, and more. We work across the UK to ensure our more common species do not become at risk. Our reserves and areas of work protect scarce and important species and habitats, including hay meadows, chalk grassland, limestone pavement, grassland and blanket bog. This is where we advance our conservation initiatives and develop best practices to share through our projects, so that plants and fungi everywhere can thrive.

**“Our reserves
and projects
advance conservation
initiatives and
develop best
practices to
share”**

Spotlight on Impact Breckland

Breckland is a unique rolling landscape of former sand dunes, grass-heath and pines, straddling the border of Norfolk and Suffolk. It is one of the driest places in England, one of the coldest in winter and hottest in summer.

The unusual nature of the Brecks supports specialised plants that occur in few other places. The Brecks are home to over 120 nationally rare and threatened plant species.

Large areas are now densely vegetated, crowding out plants that need open conditions and bare soil. When wild plants go, so too does the wildlife dependant on them.

Plantlife is focused on recovering the most threatened plant species here. The Breckland Flora Group of volunteers gathers vital data and information, so that we can support land managers with evidence-based guidance.

Spotlight on Impact Meadow Makers

Grasslands support more priority wildlife and plant species than any other habitat. They lock up carbon, reduce the risk of flood and help fight pollution. They are also a vital historical and cultural link. Meadows matter to people. Plantlife has developed tried and tested meadow restoration techniques that anyone can use.

Plantlife is spearheading Meadow Makers, a major conservation partnership to create new wild flower meadows. From the Cotswolds and the Lake District to Dartmoor and the Forest of Bowland, we use ancient “donor” sites to develop new ones. Not only will this provide a platform for wild flowers and wildlife, it is creating jobs and traineeships for the next generation of conservationists and boosting local economies.




2

Connect people with nature

to improve wellbeing and inspire action
to save species and their habitats.

The mosaic of landscapes across the UK is rich in variety, with plants at their heart. In the deepest countryside or in a window box in our towns and cities, plants offer a journey of lifelong learning and enjoyment. Fostering that spark of fascination will empower and enable change. Plants speak to all audiences. Plantlife helps people to achieve their goals for the natural world. We aim to grow this ability, so that an increasingly large and diverse audience choose to work with us, confident that by doing so they can make a difference. From stretches of golden sands to ancient woodlands carpeted in wild flowers in spring, such places are becoming rarer. Without urgent action they could be lost to both people and wildlife.

**“Working with
Plantlife helps people
like me to bring about
positive changes that
can benefit us all”**



**“We offer our
knowledge to nurture
enthusiasts, activists,
advocates, volunteers and
professionals working
to help plants thrive”**

Spotlight on Impact Ranscombe Farm

Lying on the slopes of the North Downs, Ranscombe Farm is one of the most famous botanical hotspots in Britain and one of Plantlife's flagship reserves. Internationally recognised for its exceptional suite of arable flowers, it is home to 95 per cent of the entire UK population of broad-leaved cudweed. In its fields you will find rare arable plants including probably the last remaining native site for corncockle, a species officially listed as extinct in the wild in Britain.

The reserve boasts extensive grassland and varied woodland, including 25 “ancient” trees and close to 400 “veteran” trees; it is a fragment of a lost landscape. In 2020 Ranscombe welcomed over 100,000 visitors and through our information and volunteering, we offer a reminder of how rich and colourful our farmed landscapes and cereal fields were before the age of intensive farming.

Spotlight on Impact Green Links

Green Links in Bridgend puts wellbeing at the heart of our conservation ambitions. Plantlife reaches as diverse a range of people as possible, from the very young to those in later life and those living with dementia. We partner with local organisations to draw together expertise and inspire the local community as well as future botanists and conservationists. It is a template for successful ways of working for the decade ahead.

Spotlight on Impact

We need to talk about Nitrogen

Plantlife is leading the call for action to tackle air pollution as one of the greatest threats to our wild plants, lichens and fungi. Excess nitrogen in the air is causing significant damage to our natural environment, yet few people have heard about it. Transport, power stations, industry, farm fertilisers and livestock are all major sources of the two main forms of atmospheric nitrogen pollutants - nitrogen oxides (NOx) and ammonia (NH3). Deposited directly from the air and in rain, this nitrogen permeates the soil, creates acidic conditions and causes direct damage to our flora.

The UK's 2019 State of Nature Report identifies pollution and intensive agriculture as major drivers of species and habitat loss over the past 50 years. Urgent action is needed and was highlighted in Plantlife's 2017 report, "We need to talk about Nitrogen". Plantlife will continue to lead a campaign for: new regulation to reduce ammonia emissions; government strategies to tackle the impacts of nitrogen emissions on nature; and for effective monitoring and management of affected areas.

We produce practical support and advice for land managers to reduce emissions and facilitate greater public awareness of the problem.

"At the heart of our campaigns sits practical guidance to inform, inspire and enable change"

Spotlight on Impact

Road verge campaign

Road verges are a vital refuge for wildlife, including 45 per cent of our total flora. The 500,000 kilometres of road verges that span the UK are equivalent to half of our remaining flower-rich grassland. This existing green infrastructure is a national opportunity to enhance biodiversity and bring nature back to our roadsides.

Plantlife began its Road Verge Campaign in 2013. The vision was to manage verges with wildlife in mind, to protect and enhance flower-rich habitats, nurture their environmental benefits and enhance our connection to nature. At the heart of the campaign sits our petition to councils, combined with practical guidance to inform, inspire and enable change to happen.

It is working! 7 out of 10 local authorities and their contractors are now implementing our guidance. Through our "Good Verge Guide" we work in partnership with highways agencies, industry and other wildlife organisations so that good road verge management is efficient and sustainable.

By demonstrating applied conservation capability alongside galvanising public engagement, we have demonstrated we can make a difference and we will build on this in coming years.

3 Work in partnerships

so that all people and all sectors of society can contribute to tackling the climate and nature crisis we face.

We are convinced that the complexity and urgency of the challenges ahead can be successfully addressed only through partnerships across all sectors of society. In the coming decade we will offer our skills and knowledge to accelerate plant and fungi conservation. By working with others to enable and amplify action we can harness the interest, ability and resources needed to drive positive change at speed.

“These internationally important rainforests in the UK face many threats, including invasive species, inappropriate grazing, air pollution and climate change”

Spotlight on Impact Bunloit Rewilding

The Bunloit Rewilding Project aims to create a wildlife haven of this 500-hectare estate overlooking Loch Ness in the Scottish Highlands. The goals are to enhance biodiversity, to stimulate the local economy and to lock up carbon.

This management approach comes from renewable energy entrepreneur, Jeremy Leggett, founder of Solarcentury and SolarAid. It involves innovative green bonds from Rewilding Europe Capital, and the Bunloit team is exploring carbon off-setting payments to fund its plans. They are using renewable energy for power, and wood harvested during re-generation to build eco-homes. The intention is for the estate to become a showcase for projects of this kind.

Mr Leggett has pledged not only to re-wild its grounds but also to offer his skills in social enterprise as a mentor for local start-ups. At the start, the focus will be on re-generating native woodland, peatland and pasture, which is where Plantlife comes in.

“Plantlife demonstrates a combination of plant expertise, habitat knowledge and responsiveness to the needs of landowners,” says Mr Leggett. “For those of us with aspirations to improve the biodiversity of our land, to repair and restore it to a better state, Plantlife rapidly provides baseline information from which we can plan a roadmap for our future ambitions. Working with Plantlife helps people like me to bring about positive changes that can benefit us all.” Through a coalition of landowners and communities in the region, the Bunloit estate aims to help deliver bigger, better and joined up landscapes across this stunning area of Scotland.

Spotlight on Impact Temperate Rainforests

The UK is home to a very special habitat, temperate rainforest; moss-covered, damp, filled with native trees and bursting with lower plants! It is rare globally, and warrants a much higher profile. What makes it so special is the lichens, mosses and liverworts that call these forests home, and their sheer quantity, diversity and rarity. These internationally important rainforests face many threats, including invasive species, inappropriate grazing, air pollution and climate change. Our partnerships are having some success at local level, but there is a need to scale-up or risk losing them altogether.

Plantlife’s role is pivotal. We have decades of experience. Firstly, we identified the most critical areas through our Important Plant Area mapping programme. Now we work in rainforest zones across the nations of the UK, providing specialist advice, engaging landowners and volunteers, advocating for policy changes and raising the profile of this under-celebrated habitat.

Plantlife is working in partnerships to be the driving force in collaborative action to restore temperate rainforest across whole landscapes. Through our success, we will help to tackle the biodiversity and climate crises, contribute to the green recovery, and ensure that people can enjoy these magical woodlands for generations to come.

4

Collaborate and influence

on the world stage to empower societies across the globe to help protect plants and fungi.

Plantlife is at the heart of a global network of Important Plant Areas to share expertise and accelerate conservation action.

To do our best for plants we work across the world stage. Together with our partners, we will make sure that global strategies for nature, people and the climate include the restoration of native wild plant species and habitats – for a healthy, diverse, plant rich world.

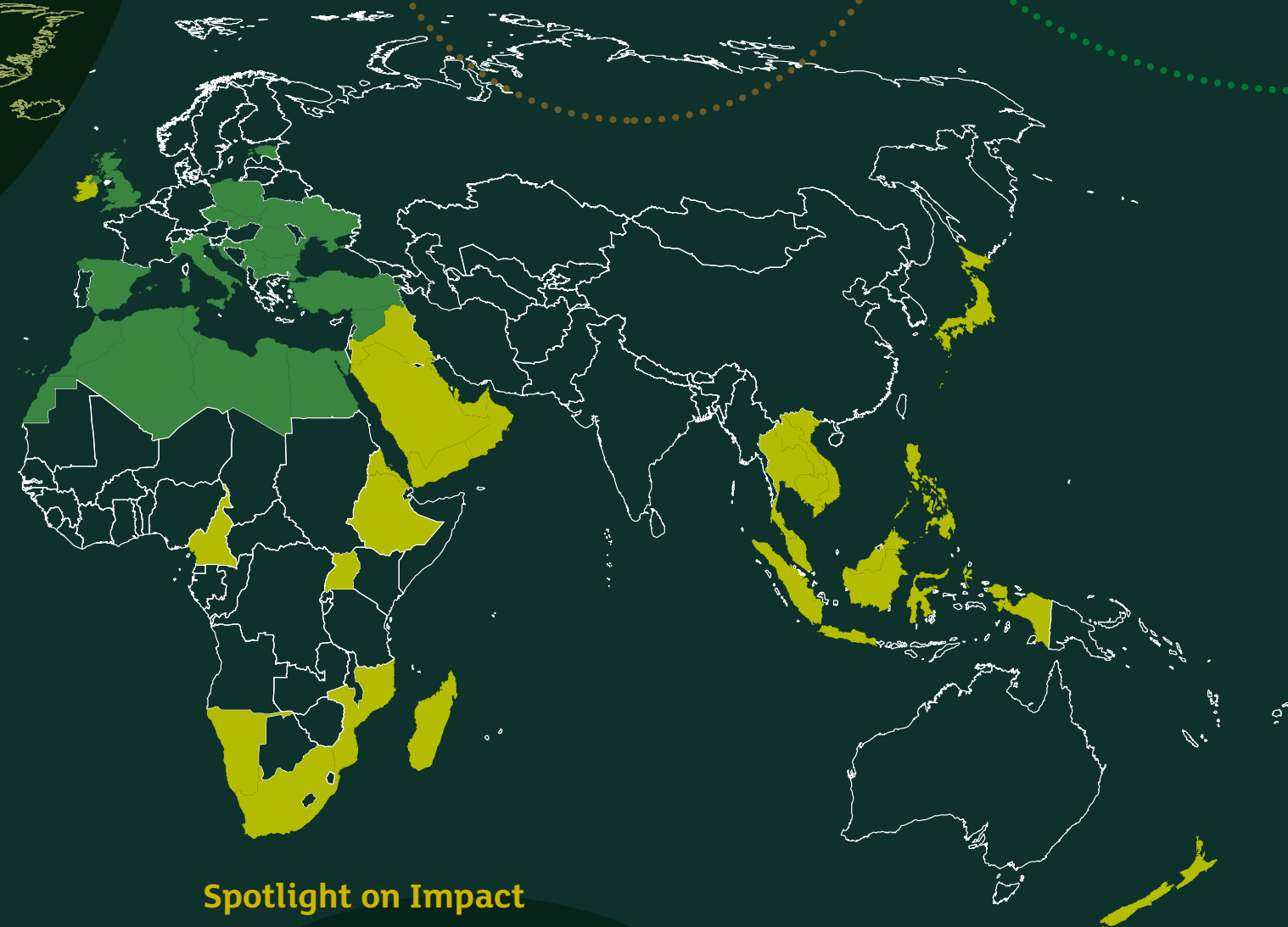
We will work to make specialist knowledge, expertise and practical resources available for effective conservation action and for an end to activities which threaten and destroy wild plant species and habitats.



“Plantlife is at the heart of a global network of Important Plant Areas to share expertise and accelerate conservation action.”

IPAs (Important Plant Areas) identified and documented

IPA (Important Plant Area) programme initiated



Spotlight on Impact

Since our founding in 1989, Plantlife has been speaking up for wild plants and fungi around the globe. We were instrumental in securing international agreement for a Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, as part of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. We initiated the Important Plant Area (IPA) programme to identify the best sites globally for the conservation of wild plants and fungi - key sites for rare, threatened and socio-economically valuable species, rare and threatened habitats and exceptional botanical richness. We developed the guidelines that help nations to identify their Important Plant Areas and we maintain an on-line database of sites. IPAs have been identified across large

sections of Europe, Africa and the Middle East and IPA programmes are under way in the Americas and Asia.

Plantlife is at the heart of a growing global IPA network which brings together scientists, policy makers, conservation organisations, local and indigenous communities, to bridge the gap from knowledge to conservation action on the ground.

Our goal is that the diversity and conservation of plants and fungi is recognised by the UN, by governments and by international institutions everywhere as a means to both tackle the climate, biodiversity and societal challenges we face right across all of our only planet.

Our Conservation ambitions

- Wild plants and fungi are globally recognised, monitored and conserved for their fundamental role in solving the nature and climate emergencies
- Species-rich wildflower and waxcap grasslands are protected and restored at scale
- Temperate rainforest is restored and ancient trees are managed to maintain their richness in ferns, mosses, liverworts, lichens and fungi

- Wild plant populations are thriving from mountain-top to coastal sand dunes and fewer species are threatened with extinction
- Reductions in atmospheric nitrogen emissions enable vulnerable fungi and flora to succeed once more
- Verges and green spaces in our cities, towns and villages provide wildflower networks to support wildlife and our wellbeing
- Farming policy and practice enables widespread management of native wildflower habitats, providing healthy livestock, soil quality, pollinators, nitrogen efficiency and carbon storage.
- Environmental legislation and strategies prioritise the protection of Important Plant Areas



Closing message from our Patron HRH The Prince of Wales

Image: Hugo Rittson Thomas | Wildflowers For The Queen



CLARENCE HOUSE

As Patron of Plantlife, I am delighted that the charity's bold new strategy sets a course to restore the diversity of wild plants and fungi across every landscape and works towards a society in which the value of wild plants to human and planetary health is recognised by all. In January 2021, as part of my Sustainable Markets Initiative, I launched the Terra Carta, a recovery plan for Nature, People and Planet that leverages the transformative potential of the private sector. The Terra Carta recognises that Nature underpins the inherent prosperity, wellbeing and future of all people and the one planet we share. Plants and fungi, of course, make up the primary habitats of all life on Earth and healthy, extensive plant communities are utterly vital for addressing the climate emergency, the biodiversity crisis and for conserving societal wellbeing and mental health. Through its mission to share its knowledge, fund future conservation and inspire both the public and the next generation to speak up for plants and the joy that they bring, Plantlife will make an invaluable difference as we tackle these interlinked challenges in the critical decade ahead.

For a #plantrichworld

Join us:

www.plantlife.org.uk/uk



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unsplash.com

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