

Under embargo until 00:01, Tuesday 21 September 2021

46 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE UK RELY ON NATURE TO BOOST MENTAL HEALTH

- **86% of UK adults now turn to local parks, green spaces and nature spots to boost their mental health and wellbeing**
- **Over half (51%) of people say pandemic lockdowns have made them appreciate nature more**
- **The research comes from The Climate Coalition as part of Great Big Green Week, a UK-wide celebration of climate action**
- **Members of The Climate Coalition, including the RSPB, are calling for a clearer Government plan on mitigating the worst effects of climate change at the COP26 climate talks in November**

More than 46 million people in the UK* now rely on nature as a key way to boost their mental health and wellbeing, new figures reveal.

Research** from The Climate Coalition to support [Great Big Green Week](#) – a UK-wide celebration of climate action – shows that 86% of people visit local parks, green spaces and nature spots to de-stress and unwind. Over half (54%) of us do so once a week, while one in ten (11%) people do it every day.

Woodland areas (56%) were cited as being most beneficial to people's mental health, followed by beaches (52%), rivers (49%), parks (49%), lakes/reservoirs (47%) and hills (39%).

Interest in nature has blossomed in the last 18 months, with 51% of people saying that pandemic lockdowns have made them appreciate it more. In addition, nearly three quarters (73%) are concerned about the future of local green spaces and nature spots, a figure that rises to 91% of those aged between 18 and 24.

The main concerns are: that wildlife and biodiversity will be negatively impacted (76%), that the nature spots themselves will disappear (65%) or reduce in size (53%), and that future generations will not be able to appreciate nature as much as the current generations can (51%).

Three quarters of the public (74%) also think the Government should do more to protect nature from climate change – a figure that is also higher for 18–24 year-olds (86%). In fact, 40% of 18–24s say they vote for politicians who will protect nature and biodiversity, compared to just 14% of the general population.

Leading charities, including The Climate Coalition and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), are now calling for a clear Government plan to rapidly escalate the protection and restoration of nature globally, and in the UK set strict targets in law to begin to reverse nature loss by 2030.

Nic Scothern, Director of Engagement for the RSPB – the largest nature conservation charity in the UK – said: “Our natural world provides us with so many benefits that we often take for granted, including fresh food and water, but the pandemic has seen people become more conscious of its restorative properties to lift our spirits and improve our health. They now want measures taken to revive our world by protecting wildlife and wild places.

“That’s why Great Big Green Week is so important. People from all walks of life are celebrating a love for nature and the environment. They’re also sending a clear message to the Prime Minister ahead of the United Nations COP26 climate talks in November: we care about nature and climate change, and we need you to deliver a clear plan and take urgent action to limit a rise in temperatures and to stop floods, heatwaves and droughts getting even worse.

“Scientific studies**** have shown that caring for our natural world could be one of our greatest weapons against climate change. Nature-based solutions such as protecting and restoring wild spaces will help to lock up greenhouse gases as well as helping wildlife and communities.”

The Climate Coalition’s research complements findings from other studies which show how important nature and wildlife are to the British public. One YouGov survey*** shows that only healthcare and the economy are seen as issues more important to the country.

Great Big Green Week, which runs from 18 – 26 September, harnesses this sentiment and will be a celebration of climate action with more than 2,500 community events and festivals being held in communities up and down the country. The theme for this year’s activity is ‘The Fight That Unites’, a declaration that people from all walks of life are united in their desire to tackle the climate emergency and understand the urgency of the challenge.

For more information on Great Big Green Week and to find events in your community, visit www.greatbiggreenweek.com

ENDS

For more information please contact the team at MHP Communications on gbgw@mhpc.com

Notes to editors:

* The UK adult population is 53,930,490 (source: World Population Review). $86\% \times 53,930,490 = 46,380,221$

** The Climate Coalition commissioned One Poll to conduct research among 2,000 UK adults (nationally-representative sample) in September 2021

*** Source: https://yougov.co.uk/topics/science/explore/topic/Environment_Green_Issues

**** Source:

https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/policy-briefings/policy-briefing_nature-based-solutions-in-the-green-recovery_the-rspb.pdf

About The Climate Coalition

The Climate Coalition is the UK’s largest group of people dedicated to action against climate change. Along with its sister organisations [Stop Climate Chaos Cymru](#) and [Stop Climate Chaos Scotland](#), it is a group of over 140 organisations – including the National Trust, Women’s Institute, Oxfam, and RSPB – and 22 million voices strong. The Climate Coalition is reaching across the UK to show love for all the things people want to protect from climate change, and to ask politicians to put aside their differences and commit to doing whatever is necessary to protect them.