

Regenerating nature in Aotearoa New Zealand - the transformative role of business

What businesses need to increase action and investment

In partnership with

Z and MfE logos

Manaaki whenua,

Manaaki tāngata,

Haere whakamua

If we care for the land,

If we care for the people,

We can move forward into the future

Whakataukī – Māori Proverb

Executive Summary

We're calling for urgent leadership, action and investment in nature. The system in which we do business continues to undervalue nature and the services nature provides. Services such as climate regulation, water, food and timber are necessary for society and business to operate. Our short-sighted approach not only exacerbates biodiversity loss and climate change, it also jeopardises vital ecosystem services, public health and economic stability. Action is vital for a just transition to an equitable, low carbon circular economy.

Nature is in trouble. Right now, more than 4,000 species are threatened or at risk of extinction in Aotearoa New Zealand. The health of our landscapes, waterways and seas has declined dramatically in recent decades.

There are two immediate actions we must take. One involves repairing the damage we have caused to nature over generations. The other involves changing our practices so we stop eroding our natural systems and move towards circular practices that regenerate nature.

Organisations can play two key roles in regenerating nature.

1. **Investing in on-the-ground restoration and regeneration nature projects.** To have a chance at restoring natural systems we need to significantly scale up the investment in on-the-ground nature projects. Community groups, iwi, hapū and landowners do not have the scale of funding needed. The responsibility falls on all of us, government, business, philanthropy and NGOs, to work together to implement solutions.
2. **Transforming business practices to be more regenerative.** To reduce the pressures on nature we must continue transforming production and consumption systems, moving towards a circular economy. This is a step change journey where organisations upskill and change their practices to implement initiatives such as circular economy principles, nature-related targets and strategies, and identifying nature-related risks and dependencies.

There is a business case for this. By recognising and valuing nature's contributions, businesses can get ahead of incoming regulations and reduce risk. They can enhance their brand reputation, create resilient supply chains and unlock new opportunities for partnerships, innovation and growth. In Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas, it is becoming evident that nature has already permeated the business agenda. It is steadily gaining momentum. By acting now, businesses can unlock new opportunities and understand the financial relevance for businesses to invest.

Critically, we need coordinated efforts from all sectors of society. That includes businesses, government, philanthropy and communities. Unprecedented collaboration between government, business and communities that is embedded in te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori will be fundamental for the transformational change required. Leading businesses are implementing circular economy principles, as well as nature-related targets and strategies.

They are identifying nature-related risks and dependencies. They are investing in on-the-ground nature projects. The government is implementing regulations to reduce environmental damage. Community, iwi and hapū groups, as well as landowners, are working tirelessly in their communities to protect and restore nature. But we are just at the beginning of this journey.

This report highlights the transformative role business can play in halting and reversing nature loss in Aotearoa New Zealand. The first section synthesises the key findings and introduces the Sustainable Business Network's (SBN) Regenerate Nature Programme. This aims to accelerate private sector investment in nature, through on-the-ground nature regeneration projects and action within business operations. The second section highlights the roles of government, big business, SMEs, community, iwi, hapū and landowners. It contains a selection of case studies from businesses and communities. The third section outlines the business and nature relationship within an Aotearoa New Zealand context. It highlights the business opportunities from taking nature action. It also discusses many of the relevant nature-related frameworks, policy and regulations.

Insights were gathered through multiple surveys and workshops. These involved businesses, philanthropic organisations, central and local government agencies, community groups, iwi and hapū taiao groups, research institutes and environmental NGOs. We found that:

- The **key drivers** for business investment in nature included: wanting to do the right thing, staff loyalty and retention, mitigating the risk from nature loss and consumer and market pressures.
- The **key barriers** that businesses face when they are investing in nature are: financial constraints, and lack of understanding, money and knowledge.
- Businesses stated they were committed to investing more in nature regeneration. When investing in on-the-ground nature projects, businesses indicated a preference for activity-based projects. In return, they wanted to see impact statistics and engagement with the projects.
- To **increase confidence** in nature investments, businesses told us they want to see standards and tools, and understand how these investments will add value to their business.

In response, SBN has launched the Regenerate Nature Programme. This is a new five-year collaboration between community, Māori, businesses, public and philanthropic sectors. It will accelerate capability and action on nature. It will support businesses to implement practices to regenerate nature and create business opportunities. It will support communities to increase investment from the private sector into on-the-ground nature projects. It will support thriving biodiversity, climate resilience and community wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand. The first phase of initiatives pulls upon the insights uncovered in the research. They focus on raising awareness, making investing in nature easy and safe, and enabling strategic collaborations. These initiatives are:

- A Business and Nature Symposium

- A suite of high-impact, investment-ready nature projects, with the development of a rating system to align nature projects to business priorities
- Impacts, metrics and tools
- A Nature Essentials training programme for business
- The establishment of the Nature Alliance with national NGOs
- The establishment of nature cluster groups
- A strategic communications campaign to raise awareness

SBN is uniquely placed to deliver this work, in collaboration with others. We've been working on nature regeneration for close to 10 years. During this time we have partnered with more than 70 community, iwi, hapū and landowner-led projects. We've collaborated with business and government to take action and create impact. Together, we've raised \$10.6 million for nature regeneration, planted more than 800,000 native plants and employed more than 200 people in nature regeneration. SBN has on-the-ground nature projects, such as the [Puhinui Regeneration Project](#), that are delivered in partnership with government, philanthropy, business, iwi and community. Projects like these enable us to test and create impactful initiatives that work for partners from all sectors.

Together, we can dramatically accelerate and scale up action on nature, making a positive impact on communities, the climate and the natural world.

Table of contents

Executive Summary	3
About the Sustainable Business Network	7
Introduction	8
Section 1: How to accelerate capability and action for nature	10
Motivations for business investment in nature.....	11
What's holding us back?.....	12
What the experts say.....	16
Additional findings: the future of private sector investment in biodiversity.....	18
What's next - a step change in nature investment.....	21
The Sustainable Business Network's Regenerate Nature Programme.....	23
Section 2: One mission, many roles	26
The role of government.....	27
The role of big business.....	28
The role of SMEs.....	29
The role of communities.....	32
How your organisation can take action for nature.....	36
Section 3: Nature investment in context	38
Nature in Aotearoa New Zealand.....	39
The business opportunities from taking nature action.....	42
The interconnected issues of nature and climate change.....	44
Investing in nature is good business.....	45
Frameworks, Policy and Regulations – what's coming for business.....	47

About the Sustainable Business Network

The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) was established in 2002. It is the largest, longest-standing sustainable business organisation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

SBN specialises in seeking out international sustainable business ideas and research, then adapting them for the unique Aotearoa New Zealand context. It has programmes working on systemic and transformational change in the circular economy, climate, procurement and nature.

SBN has close to 10 years' experience working on nature regeneration. It partners with communities, iwi and hapū to deliver nature projects. It advocates for systemic change in business and government.

During this time SBN has collaborated with more than 70 community, iwi, hapū and landowner-led projects. It has worked with government to implement change. It has applied the expertise of the more than 500 member organisations representing different sectors, industries, business sizes and localities.

This has delivered:

- \$10.6 million for nature regeneration
- 800,000+ native plants in the ground
- 200+ people employed

Now SBN is looking to scale up nature regeneration in Aotearoa New Zealand by implementing the Regenerate Nature Programme. The programme aims to accelerate organisations' capability and action for nature. This is a collaborative programme, working with the private and public sector. Together, we will scale up nature regeneration on the ground and change business practices. This will help create thriving biodiversity, a more resilient climate and enhance community wellbeing.

This will be achieved by working with communities and the private sector to:

- Raise awareness and capability for nature action
- Make investing in nature easy and safe
- Support strategic collaboration

This work aligns with the nature regeneration principle of the circular economy.

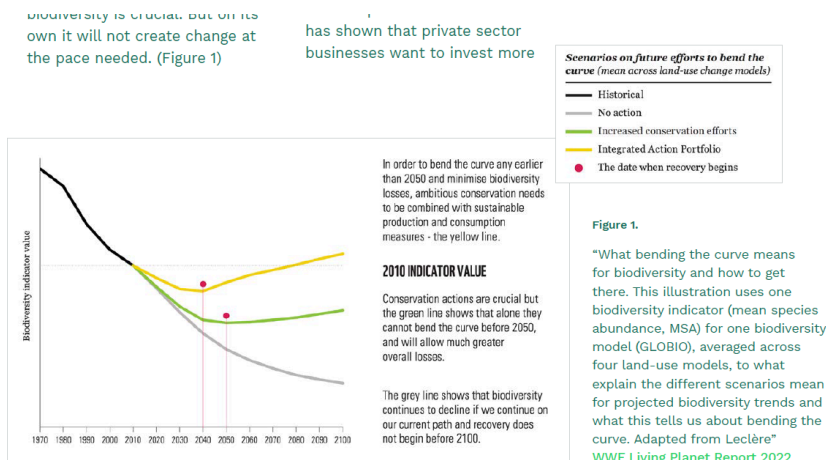
Introduction

Nature's emergence as a focal point in the business realm might seem recent. However, upon deeper examination from Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas, it becomes evident that this has already permeated the business agenda and is steadily gaining momentum.

Numerous research studies, including those from the World Economic Forum, New Zealand Government, WWF and research institutions, emphasise the urgent need for businesses to take action in support of nature. They underscore the crucial role businesses play and stress the need for immediate action.

In Aotearoa New Zealand we have numerous nature-related strategies and policies undergoing reform or implementation. Examples such as the [Waste Legislation Reform](#) and [Resource Management Reforms](#) will have influence over future business practices. We are seeing international frameworks such as the [Global Biodiversity Framework](#) and [Taskforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures](#) receiving serious attention from the Government and businesses alike.

To reverse nature loss we must transform the way we produce and consume. Our current models are contributing to the degradation of land, waterways and oceans. At the same time, we urgently need to enable solutions to increase the scale and pace of on-the-ground nature work. Working on protecting and restoring biodiversity is crucial. But on its own it will not create change at the pace needed (Figure 1).



Businesses play two transformative roles in nature regeneration:

1. Increasing investment in on-the-ground restoration and regeneration nature projects
2. Transforming business practices to be more regenerative

By accelerating organisations' capability and action for nature we could see Aotearoa New Zealand halt and reverse biodiversity loss. This will have positive outcomes for climate change, public health and enable economic stability.

Nature is valuable to all New Zealanders. Whakapapa (genealogy) intertwines Māori with the natural world. The Aotearoa 'image' is based on nature, drawing in many international visitors each year to experience what we have to offer, providing income from overseas as they do so. Primary industries rely on natural resources and a stable climate. But what is often not recognised is that all businesses rely on nature.

The good news is that investing in nature can create significant opportunities for business. There are opportunities to get ahead of regulatory changes, cost saving, enhance brand reputation, mitigate risks, create more resilient supply chains, benefit from partnership and engagement opportunities and identify areas for innovation and growth.

SBN has been working on nature regeneration with on-the-ground nature projects for close to 10 years. But we were coming across barriers and challenges in achieving the scale and pace of impact we wanted. Biodiversity loss was still occurring. We wanted to collaborate with others working on this. Together, we felt we could identify transformation opportunities to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. Our focus would be on business practices and increasing investment to impactful on-the-ground nature projects. As a result, we have created the Regenerate Nature Programme to accelerate organisations' capability and action for nature.

This report is split into three sections. Each section can be read as a stand-alone report.

- **Section 1: How to accelerate capability and action for nature.** Highlights the key motivations, barriers and future enablers for business investment in nature. It then highlights the Regenerate Nature Programme initiatives that will accelerate private sector investment in nature.
- **Section 2: One mission, many roles.** Highlights the role of government, big business, SMEs (small and medium enterprises), community, iwi and hapū groups and landowners to reverse the loss of nature. It contains case studies from businesses and communities taking action to regenerate nature in their operations and through on-the-ground nature projects.
- **Section 3: Nature investment in context.** Outlines the business and nature relationship within an Aotearoa New Zealand context. It includes the business opportunities from taking nature action, many of the nature frameworks, policy and regulations, and the current state of nature in Aotearoa New Zealand.

"Nature is a holistic term that encompasses the living environment (te taiao), which includes all living organisms and the ecological processes that sustain them. By this definition, people are a key part of nature."

[Te Mana o Te Taiao 2020](#)

Section 1: How to accelerate capability and action for nature

This section contains our key findings. It also discusses initiatives to accelerate private sector investment in nature. These include on-the-ground nature regeneration projects and actions within business operations. The findings unpick the key motivations, barriers and future enablers for business investment in nature.

We then introduce the SBN's Regenerate Nature Programme. This highlights the key initiatives being created to support business, philanthropy, government, community, tangata whenua and landowners to accelerate capability and action for nature.

[BOX OUT]

Methodology

Data and insights on motivations, barriers and future enablers for business investment in nature were collected through:

- numerous workshops with key representatives in the biodiversity system. This included: business, philanthropy, central and local government, community groups, iwi and hapū taiao groups, research institutes and environmental NGOs.
- two surveys, both distributed to the SBN nationwide database of contacts in businesses. The [first survey](#) was distributed in September 2022 and sought information on business attitudes to nature regeneration (183 respondents). The other was co-created with the Ministry of the Environment in May 2023. It sought to understand the demand, motivations and barriers for business investment in nature (105 respondents).
- a series of one-on-one discussions with businesses and on-the-ground nature projects.

Motivations for business investment in nature

The data showed that the key drivers for business investment in nature included wanting to do the right thing, staff loyalty and retention, mitigating the risk from nature loss, and consumer and market pressures.

It was found that:

Businesses want to do the right thing

The most common motivation for businesses to invest in nature was purpose-driven, with 82% of businesses saying they want to “do the right thing”.

This survey was emailed to the SBN network and therefore distributed to a business audience that is increasingly aware of environmental issues and the need to protect nature. This could indicate the high result within this category.

The [Kantar 2023 Better Future Report](#) found that 66% of people said that if they heard about a company being irresponsible or unethical they would stop buying their products or stop using their services. In addition, 69% of people said that they didn't think businesses were doing enough to reduce their environmental impact.

They act to retain good staff

Our survey data showed that 30% of businesses highlighted staff loyalty and retention as a key motivation for nature action. Many employees, particularly the younger generation, value working for socially and environmentally responsible companies. Taking action for nature can enhance employee engagement, job satisfaction and retention, as it aligns with their personal values and gives them a sense of purpose. Gen Z and millennials believe that business has a significant role to play in addressing environmental issues, according to [Deloitte's 2023 Gen Z and millennial survey](#).

Investment mitigates nature-related risks

24% of businesses indicated mitigating the risk of nature loss as a key motivator for their business action on nature.

All businesses have some degree of nature-related risk in their operations or value chain. For many it remains hidden.

Natural disasters like floods, storms and droughts can seriously affect businesses. But there's a way to reduce the risks associated with these events. By investing in the right nature-based solutions like restoring wetlands or implementing coastal protection measures, businesses can start to mitigate some of their risks. When we take care of the environment, businesses become stronger and are less likely to be disrupted.

Stakeholders want action

Consumer and market-related pressures were also found to be key drivers for businesses to invest in nature: 57% of businesses surveyed are being asked by stakeholders to be more environmentally friendly.

Businesses may face pressure from their stakeholders to adopt nature-friendly practices. For SMEs, this may be driven by larger corporations aiming to improve their own sustainability performance throughout their supply chains. For larger businesses, this may be driven by frameworks or legislation. Taking action for nature can help businesses meet these expectations, as well as maintain positive relationships and regulatory compliance.

Kantar's [Public Sector Reputation Index](#) also includes elements of environmental responsibility in establishing business reputation. By taking action for nature, businesses can enhance their reputation, attract customers, and differentiate themselves from competitors.

It is important to acknowledge that some consumers who claim to be sustainability motivated will actually often prioritise cost, effort or convenience over the more sustainable choice. The global study, [Kantar Sustainability Sector Index 2022](#), found that 94% of people want to live a sustainable lifestyle, but only 13% of people are actively changing their behaviour. Consumers indicate that they want business to broaden access to sustainable choices and remove the financial premium on green products. Consumers are also confused about sustainability messaging. These issues can be a barrier to business action through backlash around consumers paying more for a 'green product', caution around making a green claim due to greenwashing risks, or increasing expectations around transparency.

Sustainability saves money

Implementing sustainable practices can lead to long-term cost savings and create positive outcomes for nature. For example, energy-efficient processes, waste reduction, and resource management can lower operational expenses, and improve efficiency.

What's holding us back?

The survey data indicated the key barriers that businesses in Aotearoa New Zealand face when they are investing in nature are financial constraints and lack of understanding, money and knowledge (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

1. Lack of money

The main barrier to businesses investing in nature, both within their business practices and in on-the-ground nature projects, was financial.

68% of businesses said the economic situation was limiting their ability to invest in nature-related activities.

When asked specifically about barriers to donating, sponsoring or financially supporting on-the-ground nature projects, 60% of businesses identified that it was financial.¹

This may reflect the current economic reality. Companies have had to navigate unprecedented events in the past years, from the Covid-19 lockdowns to extreme weather events.

However, it also suggests the lack of understanding and awareness in the business community about the value that investing in nature provides. This is not surprising. Nature-related impacts or action have not been elevated to the level of climate-related impacts or dependencies yet. We will see nature being elevated more frequently on the business agenda in the near future.

There is a challenge in getting nature-related action accepted as a needed investment that will mitigate risk and provide benefits to business. Frameworks such as the [Global Biodiversity Framework](#) and Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) are starting to raise business awareness of nature-related risks and opportunities. New policies, biodiversity markets and large business action will help create additional drivers and incentives for biodiversity action.

2. Lack of understanding

Many of the top barriers identified by businesses indicate a lack of understanding of how nature integrates with their business and the value it can provide.

26% of businesses do not understand the financial relevance of investing in nature to their business.

21% of businesses said that there is no value for their business or they don't know whether customers or other stakeholders will care if they invest in nature-related activities.

38% of businesses said that nature was not an issue for their business.

The climate movement dominates the business community's attention on sustainability issues, with many companies grappling with climate action. Attention for nature regeneration is lagging. But we are seeing frameworks, targets and research developing at speed. These will help to elevate the financial relevance and business value of investing in nature. As we see nature becoming more prominent on the business agenda we will see more market pressures for businesses to develop mitigation and adaptation strategies for nature.

The current economic system often under-values the worth of nature and the services nature provides. There is limited understanding within society, including business, on the

¹ [SBN Survey, September 2022](#)

importance of nature action for prosperity and what actions business can take to avoid the continued degradation of nature.

3. Lack of time

Time constraints were identified as a strong barrier to business action for nature, both within business practices and investment into on-the-ground nature projects.

36% of businesses identified time constraints as a key barrier to nature action.

Staff shortages, increased workloads and other priorities pull on business owners' time and resources. When there isn't a legislative requirement to act, the relevance will fall down the list. With an increase in research, policy and frameworks around nature action, there is a hope that this will rise on the agenda for companies.

4. Lack of knowledge

The survey results indicate that some businesses lack knowledge on how to take action for nature.

Many businesses have a lack of knowledge on how to act in a way that creates positive and meaningful outcomes for nature. Nature-related action can be complex and there isn't much guidance to help businesses to act with certainty and speed.

The key barriers identified as limiting business action for nature were:

- not understanding the relevance to my organisation (30%)
- not knowing where to get good help and advice (28%)
- a lack of experienced staff (17%)

On-the-ground nature projects

When asked specifically about barriers to donating, sponsoring or financially supporting nature with on-the-ground nature projects, 28% of businesses said they were held back by lack of experienced staff and not knowing what projects to support.²

² [SBN Survey, September 2022](#)

Title: Financial constraints that limit businesses' ability to invest in nature-related activities

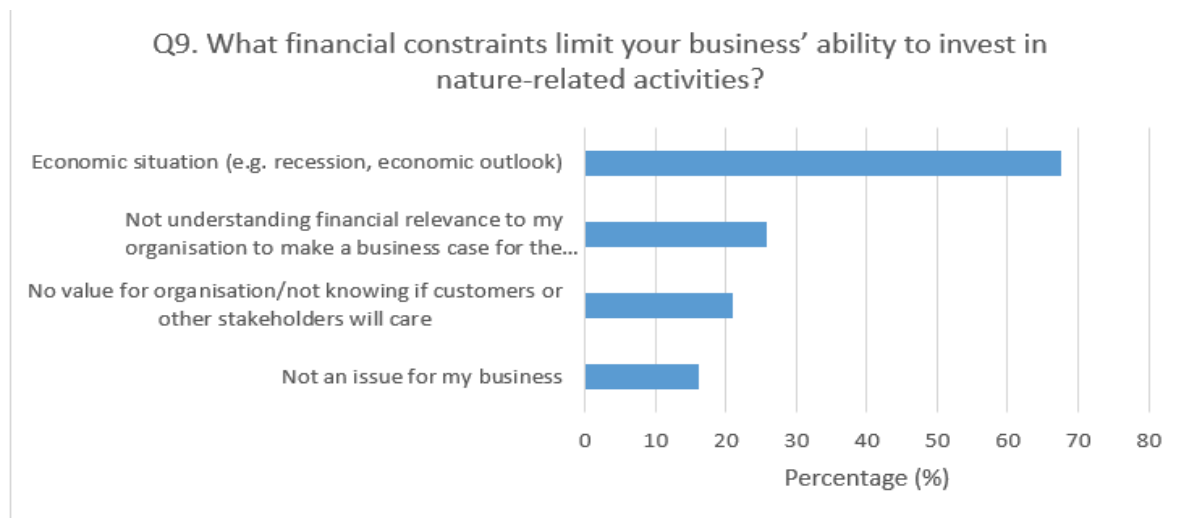


Figure 2: SBN and Ministry of the Environment May 2023 Survey. Indicating the **financial** constraints that limit businesses ability to invest in nature-related activities.

Title: Knowledge constraints that limit businesses ability to invest in nature-related activities



Figure 3: SBN and Ministry of the Environment May 2023 Survey. Indicating the **knowledge** constraints that limit businesses ability to invest in nature-related activities.

What the experts say

As part of the diagnostic work, SBN brought together leaders from across the biodiversity system to identify the system-wide barriers for increasing investment in nature regeneration.

Representation included the government, research, not-for-profit, business and consultancy. The industries represented included agriculture, assurance, banking, climate change, conservation/environment, energy and legal.

The experts identified the top six barriers as:

1. Lack of money

There is a lack of policy, finance and economic instruments to drive up investment in nature regeneration in Aotearoa New Zealand.³

Aotearoa New Zealand needs to grow funding opportunities, create sustainable funding models, create easy ways to channel investment to nature projects and collaborate to prioritise current funding.

2. Lack of collaboration

It was recognised that nature regeneration needs to be an all-of-society responsibility.

There need to be ways that we can come together to increase funding opportunities and create a shared vision for nature across all sectors.

Currently, there are lots of people working on parts of the system, but it is disconnected and not joined up. There is a lack of cross-government collaboration, and collaboration within the nature sector.

3. Continuing barriers for Māori

There remain barriers for Māori within the nature regeneration system. This includes te ao Māori approaches, co-governance, proper payment and valuing of Māori input, and partnerships on project delivery.

4. Lack of data and research

There's a lack of robust, agreed metrics and impact reporting standards for nature regeneration globally, and in Aotearoa New Zealand. There needs to be transformational change to value nature in economic and decision-making systems.

The experts called for data on cost models for regeneration at scale, quantification of investment gaps, data sovereignty and better data on biodiversity loss.

³ [Scaling Climate Finance Biodiversity Instruments Hall & Lindsay 2021](#)

Experts also acknowledged the need to start somewhere and not wait until the science was perfect.

5. Social, learning, understanding

We have lessons to learn from the climate change action arena. We need strong, cohesive messages on the crisis and actions people can take.

Experts said there is a high awareness of climate change impacts, but much less on biodiversity loss. The business and nature relationship is not understood. It is not seen as a priority issue. Proving nature's relevance to business is a key enabler to getting funds for nature.

6. Training and career development

There are skills and opportunity gaps for nature-based careers. The training for nature-based careers is inadequate to meet the scaled growth we need for nature regeneration.

Additional findings: the future of private sector investment in biodiversity

The surveys indicated that businesses have an increasing appetite and aspiration to invest in nature regeneration. When investing in on-the-ground nature projects, businesses indicated a preference for activity-based projects. In return, they wanted to see impact statistics and engagement with the projects. They also want standards, tools and greater understanding of how these investments will add value to their business.

70% of survey respondents said their investment in on-the-ground nature projects in Aotearoa New Zealand will increase in the next five years.

What types of nature projects would businesses consider investing in?

When surveyed about what nature-related projects businesses preferred to invest in, 77% indicated projects that undertake conservation activity, such as planting, fencing and predator control.

69% of respondents to the survey indicated a preference for investing in the protection of existing native habitats. 61% of businesses said they would consider investing in nature projects that contained a social element. While 57% selected investing in outcomes-based projects, such as supporting Predator Free 2050 or kiwi breeding programmes.

Additionally, businesses mentioned a desire to focus on community-based projects with positive outcomes for communities, which could also be co-governed with tangata whenua. Project integrity was also mentioned as a factor influencing business investment.

Future enablers to investment

According to businesses, when asked what would encourage or better enable them to invest more in nature-related activities, these options came out on top:

- adding value to business (50%)
- having a personal connection to the project or location (46%)
- market drivers e.g. customer expectation or overseas markets (45%)
- sustainability reporting such as ESG Reporting, Sustainable Development Goals (44%)
- NZ aligned impact reporting from their investment opportunities (43%)
- trustworthy investment opportunities, verified projects and outcomes (43%)

To improve confidence in nature-based investments, businesses want to see:

- standards, such as measuring, monitoring and reporting standards, for nature activities and participants (62%)
- tools, such as publicly available information on species and location priorities for protection, and a database on local initiatives (52%)

- regulatory oversight of market activity and participants (e.g. government regulation) (42%)
- recognition of tikanga and mātauranga Māori (30%)

When investing in on-the-ground nature projects, businesses identified the important factors as:

- environmental and biodiversity outcomes
- personal connection to the project
- tangible outcomes
- improving staff wellbeing
- providing staff engagement opportunities.

In return for their investment, businesses wanted (in order of importance)

1. impact statistics
2. direct engagement with the project
3. communications material
4. written reports (Figure 4).

Title: What businesses want to see from on-the-ground projects they invest in

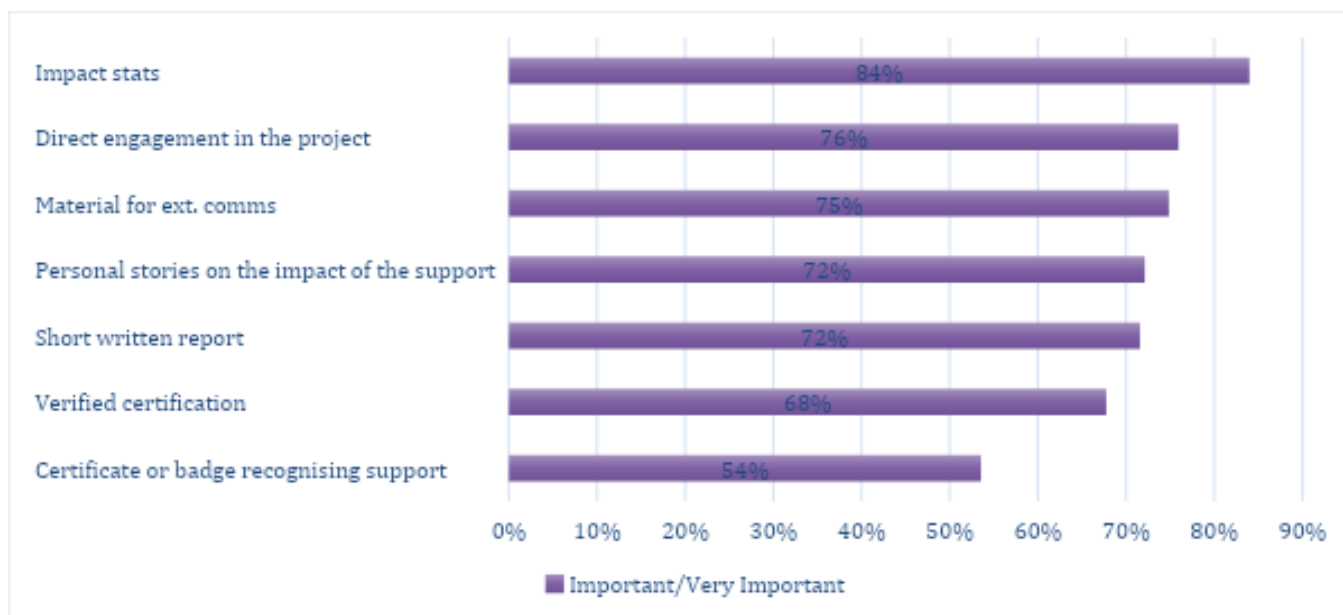


Figure 4: SBN survey from November 2022, indicating how important each output would be to business, in return for investment in on-the-ground nature projects.

Businesses wanted future learning opportunities hosted by SBN to be focused around:

- case studies of businesses supporting nature
- te ao Māori lens on restoration and biodiversity
- procurement policies to protect nature

- emerging biodiversity offsets and nature credits
- the basics of Aotearoa New Zealand biodiversity/nature

Note that the value of nature to business was not included in the options of this survey.

What's next - a step change in nature investment

What does the research tell us about where to focus initiatives to accelerate organisations' capability and action for nature?

1. **On-the-ground nature projects** (delivered by community, iwi, hapū and landowners) **are under-resourced. 70% of businesses surveyed indicated their investment in on-the-ground nature projects in Aotearoa New Zealand would increase in the next five years.**

To do this, companies indicated they needed:

- **Easy, trustworthy and verified on-the-ground nature projects to invest in.** Many businesses don't know what projects are good to invest in. They want to see trustworthy and verified projects. Standardised monitoring and reporting and databases of priority sites and local initiatives would help.
 - **Understand the value of this investment.** Many businesses lack the understanding and knowledge of how investing in on-the-ground nature projects could add value to their business. They identified that understanding this would encourage them to invest in more nature projects.
 - **Clear outcomes and data.** Businesses need verified outcomes, communications and impact statistics to be confident in their investment in on-the-ground nature projects. Currently, most business people are not clear about what great nature projects look like in terms of outcomes and impacts.
 - **Connections to people and nature.** Business people want to see and feel a return on the investments they make. That means direct engagement and personal connections to the projects, including ensuring their staff are engaged.
2. **Businesses are motivated to invest in nature.** They want to 'do the right thing' (82%). But they lack the knowledge and time to know what nature initiatives to prioritise, implement and support.

Companies are keen to learn:

- **The value that taking action for nature has on their business operations and value chains** – 57% of businesses are receiving pressure from stakeholders to be more environmentally friendly. Nature is the next big issue to accompany climate on the business agenda. As the recognition grows, businesses will see more pressure from shareholders such as investors and customers, to act in a way that produces outcomes that are positive for nature.
- **How to embed nature action into their business** – We asked what would encourage them to take action for nature. Business people said that their decisions would be swayed by demonstrations of the added value to their business, case studies of other businesses taking action, tools and concrete outcomes data.

- **The current state and trends of business action for nature** – This came out as a key learning opportunity from businesses. The top subjects were examples from other businesses, te ao Māori approaches to restoration and biodiversity, procurement policies to protect nature, emerging biodiversity offsets and nature credits and the basics of Aotearoa New Zealand biodiversity.
 - **From other businesses that have taken action for nature** – Businesses wanted to hear case studies and stories of how other businesses have supported nature. This helps remove the understanding and knowledge barriers to nature action.
3. **The nature sector is fragmented.** There's an opportunity to join up national nature organisations and on-the-ground local organisations. This will increase the scale and pace of investment from the private sector through strategic and coordinated action.

To do this we need to:

- **Pull together national nature entities.** This will provide strategic and coordinated impact. This could create opportunities to unlock funding otherwise unavailable to communities, such as overseas investment and additional investment from the philanthropic and business sector.
 - **Create opportunities for on-the-ground groups to connect and share.** This could enable resource efficiency and learning across the projects, meaning increased scale and pace of nature regeneration.
 - **Create opportunities for the private sector and nature sector to connect and share.** This will break down the barriers around business understanding of on-the-ground nature projects. It will also help projects that are unsure about how to approach the private sector for investment opportunities.
4. **Policy and regulations give business certainty to act. When businesses are short on resources, policy and regulation provide the known framework to enable businesses to invest money and time to adapt.**
- The number one barrier to nature action was financial. Providing a stable policy and regulation environment that phases out environmentally harmful business activities and transitions Aotearoa New Zealand to a circular economy will create powerful systemic change that will deliver both biodiversity and climate outcomes. This is particularly important with policy and regulations relating to actions within business operations. For example, the phasing out of certain plastic items that came into effect on 1 July 2023. Our results indicate that businesses feel that the government has a role to play in improving business confidence to invest in nature actions, especially in the regulatory oversight of market activity.

The Sustainable Business Network's Regenerate Nature Programme

[Box this out] *This long-term systems change programme needs long-term investment, both financially and strategically.*

SBN is looking for:

- *Business, philanthropy and government leaders to be part of this innovative programme.*
- *SME nature champions to join us*
- *Investment-ready, impactful nature projects*

Join us in showing leadership for nature!

The research has given us insights into how we can work together to accelerate capability and action for nature.

[Quote] "The science has never been clearer; the voices of citizens have never been louder. Nature is the soundest investment for economic resilience and human well-being."

[World Economic Forum, Scaling Investments for Nature 2022](#)

SBN is launching the Regenerate Nature Programme. A collaboration between community, Māori, business, public and philanthropic sectors. It will deliver transformational and innovative system change.

The programme focuses on implementing impactful initiatives that create thriving biodiversity, climate resilience and community wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our extensive research has identified barriers, motivations and enablers of business and community action in nature regeneration. This has revealed three leverage points where we can focus our efforts.

- 1. Awareness and capability raising**
- 2. Making investing in nature easy and safe**
- 3. Strategic collaboration**

We've designed seven initial initiatives around these leverage points for Phase One of the programme.

They focus on SBN's strengths:

- enabling collaboration between sectors and industries
- practical experience in operational delivery, including with our on-the-ground projects, [Puhinui Regeneration Project](#), [Hauraki Gulf](#) and [Million Metres Streams](#)
- partnerships with business, community and government sectors

As the programme progresses, SBN will continue to expand the initiatives.

The Phase One cluster of initiatives includes:

Biodiversity and Nature Symposium

A symposium to educate and discuss the relationship between business and nature. This will be aimed at the business sector. It will support companies to undertake actions that are positive for nature. We'll hear from government, big business, SMEs, consultancies, Māori and NGOs. We'll discuss how to create positive nature action in your business, case studies, policy initiatives, climate and nature targets, te ao Māori insight, nature-based solutions, circular economy and more.

High-impact, investment ready nature projects

A suite of high-impact, investable nature programmes delivered by community, iwi, hapū and landowners for businesses to select for investment. SBN will remove the risk and uncertainty for businesses, by developing robust assessment criteria. These will highlight the best of Aotearoa New Zealand's nature projects on a platform for businesses to select their nature investments.

A rating system will be co-developed by businesses, technical experts and on-the-ground practitioners. It will rate each project's ability to meet national biodiversity priorities, biodiversity outcomes, social outcomes, cultural outcomes and more. Businesses can use this system to align nature projects to their priorities. They will know they are choosing a safe investment and be protected from greenwashing claims.

Impact, metrics, and tools

Working collaboratively with businesses, government, technical experts, community and Māori, SBN will develop a standardised set of metrics to showcase biodiversity impact. Our other initiatives will inform and advise on this work. SBN will work with others to develop or distribute tools to enable businesses to identify local initiatives and other data to inform nature investment and action.

Nature Essentials Training Programme

This training course will help organisations understand how to take nature-related action in Aotearoa New Zealand. It will cover the state of nature, why businesses should act, how to act for nature in operations, value chains and through regeneration and restoration projects.

The Nature Alliance

This alliance will pull together large organisations working with nature in Aotearoa New Zealand to collaborate to strategically increase the scale and pace of nature regeneration. This will create a strong, aligned voice for nature and will allow the group to strategically look at systemic nature issues such as the skills and resources pipeline. Initial conversations

are occurring between organisations, such as, [Forest & Bird](#), [New Zealand Landcare Trust](#), [Predator Free 2050 Limited](#), [Predator Free NZ Trust](#), [QEI National Trust](#), [Save the Kiwi](#), [Sustainable Business Network](#), [Trees that Count](#), and [WWF-New Zealand](#).

Nature cluster groups

We will create groups to link up businesses with each other and technical experts to share information and tips to accelerate organisational capability and action for nature. Groups will be established for all levels of business action, from beginners to leaders. A community cluster group will be established. It will work collectively to increase private sector investment in projects.

Strategic communications campaign

We will lead a strategic communications campaign, across all channels, to elevate the role of the private sector in nature action. This will raise awareness of the nature crisis and the role business can play in this, then provide pathways for action. This will ensure companies have the skills, knowledge and capability to be effective.

SBN is assembling a cohort of nature leaders from big business, SMEs, government and philanthropy to govern and provide strategic direction to the programme.

Technical groups will be established to provide the operational development and direction to these initiatives, including representation from scientists, businesses, government, community and Māori. Other representatives will be brought in where needed.

Section 2: One mission, many roles

This section highlights the role of government, big business, SMEs, community groups, iwi and hapū taiao (nature) groups and landowners to halt and reverse the loss of nature. There are inspiring case studies from businesses and communities taking action to regenerate nature in their operations and through on-the-ground nature projects.

The role of government

The role of government is to provide the leadership for a nationwide response to the loss of nature, while engaging and activating the business community.

Government provides the legal, policy and regulatory frameworks that businesses operate in. These regulations provide certainty for businesses to invest in changes that create positive actions for nature.

In the past, Aotearoa New Zealand's regulatory and policy frameworks have not been effective in halting and reversing biodiversity loss. They have been disjointed and outdated, and decisions have impacted negatively on nature. The New Zealand Government is currently undertaking a review of some of the legislation. To further this, the Global Biodiversity Framework, to which the New Zealand Government is a signatory, calls for the Government to turn the framework's goals and targets into policy and legal requirements. Done well, this has the potential to foster a fair and stable business operating environment and the potential for new technologies and business opportunities.

The Government has a role to play in providing leadership on nature-based strategy, research priorities, incentives and data accessibility to make nature action easier. The effective implementation of the [Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy – Te Mana o te Taiao](#), including actions for business, will help provide direction to the business sector on the role it can play in nature recovery. Ensuring biodiversity data is accessible to enable action from businesses to mitigate and adapt their nature-related impacts will be important. This includes information on species and location priorities for protection. Incentives, such as biodiversity markets and other financial levers, can push for greater action.

The Government has a role to provide leadership to move the economic and decision-making system to a place where nature is valued. This will create better visibility, understanding and action on the importance of nature to our economic and societal systems. This could look like prioritising systems to value nature, such as ecosystem services and aligning decision-making to elevate nature recovery.

The role of big business

Big business plays a key role in enabling action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The private sector can drive nature action from government and others. Large businesses can advocate for change at both policy and regulation levels, as well as help to facilitate SME action due to setting the systems they operate in (e.g. sustainable supply chain requirements).

Large businesses can lead the way on nature strategies and targets, sharing their learnings with other businesses to speed up their journey. This enables smaller businesses to benefit from the technologies and processes implemented by larger businesses and create positive nature action.

There is a major lack of finance for biodiversity action in Aotearoa New Zealand. This cannot be resolved exclusively by public sector funding. Larger businesses can invest in on-the-ground nature projects, new technologies or initiatives that reduce their impact on nature, systems change programmes and innovative approaches to tackle the biodiversity crisis. By partnering with others there are opportunities for knowledge sharing, te ao Māori integration and reduced costs.

Big business can look for opportunities to accelerate investment into nature through many avenues, which can include looking at nature investment for risk mitigation through the Taskforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), voluntary markets to promote action to reduce carbon costs and access to capital via green finance.

[BOX OUT]

Case Study:

Business collaboration for nature action

Business for Nature is a global coalition of leading businesses committed to accelerating the transition to a nature-positive economy. It is catalysing a shift towards a future where nature action is seen as essential for economic prosperity.

The organisation emphasises the need for mandatory disclosure of nature impact in corporate reporting. Similar to financial reporting, it is about businesses being transparent about their dependencies and impacts on nature.

More than 400 business and finance institutions from 52 countries, including some New Zealand businesses, came together to help convince governments to adopt Target 15 of the Global Biodiversity Framework. This is calling for large businesses and financial institutions to assess and disclose their risks, impacts and dependencies on nature by 2030.

In this way companies are held accountable for their nature-related actions. This leads to increased awareness and understanding of the importance of nature in business operations.

The role of SMEs

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can play a vital role in taking action for nature, while securing their long-term business viability. Preserving natural resources, such as clean water, clean air and healthy ecosystems, is crucial for business continuity and resilience.

SMEs make up a large proportion of New Zealand businesses. They play a vital role in the nation's economy. They can play a similarly huge collective role in nature regeneration.

According to a business survey conducted by SBN, primarily targeting SMEs, only 24% of businesses have incorporated nature targets, such as biodiversity and freshwater actions, into their operations. In contrast, 58% of businesses reported having climate targets. This discrepancy underscores the heightened emphasis (50% more interest) placed by SMEs on climate-related initiatives than nature-related. The findings could indicate a lack of awareness among businesses regarding the tangible benefits and value of engaging in nature-related actions for their business.

Some SMEs may have the potential to be able to change their business practices more rapidly than larger organisations. This could include initiatives that ensure their business has a positive impact on nature. This could be through waste minimisation, phasing out non-Forest Stewardship Council packaging or donating a proportion of sales to community nature projects. This comes with additional benefits to business. Beyond 'doing the right thing', the company can get ahead of incoming regulations, attract and retain talent and position itself as a responsible business.

Nature positive operations can also contribute to resource efficiency and cost savings for SMEs. Implementing energy-efficient technologies, adopting circular economy principles, or reducing waste can result in reduced operational costs and increased profitability over time. SMEs can explore opportunities for waste reduction, recycling or local sourcing to minimise their environmental impact and gain financial benefits through resource optimisation.

SMEs often have values aligning to community and whānau and typically want to be intertwined with their local communities. Investing in community nature projects, such as tree planting and predator control, can support community wellbeing and connection, while aiding the company in meeting its climate, nature and community aspirations. Many local nature projects have diverse investments coming from government, other businesses, NGOs and research support. This offers opportunities for SMEs to access this expertise and funding, while potentially provide access to these networks.

[BOX OUT]

Case Study: HealthPost

A healthy approach to business and nature

HealthPost is dedicated to promoting natural health without compromising the environment.

Based in Golden Bay, the online natural health retailer is B Corp certified and a Zero Carbon certified business through Ekos. In 2017 it established the HealthPost Nature Trust, committing \$100,000 a year and resources to restore biodiversity in the Onetahua, Farewell Spit area.

The Trust has partnered with the Department of Conservation and Manawhenua ki Mohua (representing three local iwi) to create a three-hectare predator-proof fence at Wharariki Ecosanctuary at Cape Farewell. Through successful translocations of pakahā (fluttering shearwater), the Trust aims to re-establish mainland colonies. Extensive trapping and planting days further contribute to the restoration efforts.

The Trust's regeneration work has empowered a community of conservation-minded individuals, united in restoring biodiversity, addressing climate change and improving the mauri (life force) of the area.

"Year on year we are seeing more team members bringing whānau along to our planting days. This is what money can't buy; community and our team coming together in nature – it's priceless," says HealthPost Sustainability Lead Lucy Butler.

HealthPost suppliers are required to meet the business's ethical and environmental standards. Information on how care is shown for the community and where ingredients are sourced is required to increase transparency and responsibility. Products are carefully selected to ensure they are free of harmful chemicals and that packaging has an end-of-life option in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Case Study: Garage Project

Brewers turn beer into trees

Wellington craft brewery Garage Project prioritises innovation and experimentation, while having a positive impact on its community and the environment.

Recognising the importance of water for brewing, the business has supported the Million Metres Streams regeneration project at Baring Head, near Wellington, since 2018. The project aims to conserve and improve water quality. This has resulted in 1,250 trees being planted and cared for until they can survive on their own.

Since 2022 the business has raised \$15,300 for Trees for Canterbury planting projects by donating \$1 from every six-pack sale of its 'Treehugger' beer made from 100% New Zealand ingredients.

Steve Almond is Garage Project Sustainability Manager. He says: "Brewing uses a significant amount of energy and water and is susceptible to climate change. Therefore, we want to reduce our environmental impact."

"Helping with regeneration projects is important to us because we want brewing to be a sustainable industry long-term. This also lets our customers know that we are actively working to reduce our impact, and enjoys great support from our employees."

The business is phasing out non-Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified packaging. It's eliminating single-use plastic kegs for exports, opting for refillable, steel kegs. Garage Project is collaborating with its suppliers to establish return systems in different international markets.

Since 2017, Garage Project has used certified renewable or zero-carbon electricity. It became a certified zero-carbon business four years ago. It purchases carbon offsets from native forest regeneration projects in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

Garage Projects sets an inspiring example for small businesses. International retailers are increasingly asking Garage Project to share its sustainability credentials and efforts.

The role of communities

There are many diverse community groups, mana whenua and landowners actively involved in nature work across Aotearoa New Zealand. Inspiring and committed people are working on these initiatives. They work on projects such as endangered species, planting and predator control as well as research and systems change initiatives. All of them are under-resourced. Because of this, they are struggling to deliver the positive impact needed at the scale required.

The role of national and regional NGOs

National and regional NGOs have a key role in steering business investment to strategic and impactful nature priorities.

National NGOs, regional entities or large-scale catchment groups play a key role in ensuring a coordinated and strategic approach to nature regeneration. By working across large areas they can identify opportunities where investment can have greatest impact. For example, creating corridors of native plantings or predator control to join up different local projects.

National, regional and catchment/large-scale area entities can ensure:

- nature projects are connected and aligned
- support is given to nature projects across the motu
- nature projects are achieving the greatest impact
- the nature sector can open up opportunities for additional funding to groups

These entities have the ability to identify quality nature projects across the nation. They can set standards to align metrics and reporting. They can support projects (and businesses that are investing) with quality assurance, impacts and storytelling. They can coordinate opportunities for funders to get involved with on-the-ground nature projects.

More support means greater outcomes

We do not have the scale of funding needed for conservation activities in Aotearoa New Zealand. Community groups, iwi, hapū and landowners have little to no funding to undertake their nature regeneration activities. The funding that is available is usually small and short-term. It can run out before biodiversity gains can be secured. The responsibility falls on all of us, government, business, philanthropy and NGOs, to work together to implement solutions. To have a chance at restoring natural systems we need more investment in on-the-ground nature projects. Regenerating Aotearoa New Zealand's natural systems is not an overnight job. These projects need long-term support, with trained people, to succeed.

There is fragmented action

Due to the lack of investment, and therefore time, nature projects are disjointed. Many project leaders expressed the need to join up to share resources and be more strategic

across landscapes. The current reality is that projects can compete with each other to get investment into their work. This investment is mostly separated into specific individual initiatives or actions. It lacks the long-term stability required for nature conservation. For example, funding can be for one year of predator control, when sustained predator control over many years is needed. Every group we talked to discussed the fact that they need continuous investment to maintain the biodiversity gains they had made in their projects. For example, they need to keep weeds away from their plantings, or keep trapping to save endangered species for several years.

This fragmented action makes it harder for there to be true impact in nature regeneration. It lacks strategic direction. If projects had adequate funding and support, we could start to see more strategic landscape scale strategies, project efficiencies, impacts and outcomes that would increase the scale and pace of nature regeneration. This means resilient communities, climate action and thriving biodiversity.

The funding models are flawed

During our research we heard from iwi and hapū groups that, at times, they need to adapt their aspirations to meet the funding criteria for a grant. It was also identified that if they hadn't reached a settlement under the Treaty of Waitangi processes, financial constraints mean they are relying on volunteers, not paid staff, to create funding applications. The [Farming with Native Biodiversity](#) pilot identified that funding associated with on-farm biodiversity restoration contained significant barriers. These include short application windows, strict eligibility and delivery criteria and reporting dependencies. Community groups talked about the lack of resources to apply for funding, short funding deadlines for delivery, lack of multi-year funding and lack of experience engaging with the private sector.

Philanthropic investment

In 2019 the [Philanthropy New Zealand / Tōpūtanga Tuku Aroha o Aotearoa Stocktake of Environmental Funding Report](#) stated that 4% of the total philanthropic spend went to the environment in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2017/18. In November 2022, SBN hosted a workshop with philanthropic organisations to understand how to unlock increased investment from the sector. The key findings were that philanthropic organisations are looking for projects and initiatives that are strategic and coordinated. Where groups can take a large landscape approach and bring together people across a sub-region there is more likelihood of longer-term funding support.

How the private sector can help

The Government's Jobs for Nature funding provided an incredible boost to 469 nature projects. It highlighted the economic and social impacts that can come from supporting jobs in nature. Collectively, these projects have produced strong environmental and social outcomes. The private sector can have a role to play in supporting this work to continue.

In our research 70% of businesses said that their investment in on-the-ground nature projects will increase in the next five years. Their preference was to invest in activity-based

nature projects such as planting. In return for this investment, business wanted to see standardised impact statistics and opportunities for direct engagement with the project.

[BOX OUT]

Case Study:

Te ao Māori key to restoring native forests

The Kaimai Mamaku Restoration Project is on a mission to restore the mauri (life force) of the Kaimai Mamaku. The project is led by Manaaki Kaimai Mamaku Trust, which administers \$19.4 million Mahi mo te Taiao (Jobs for Nature) funding from the Department of Conservation.

The Kaimai Mamaku's native forests are threatened with collapse due to the impacts of pests, diseases and climate change. Since 2021, 12 iwi-hapū-led projects have been established to restore forest health through pest, plant and animal control and kauri disease prevention. More than 70 kaimahi (workers) have been employed and trained, 8,000 bait stations and traps deployed and monitoring programmes set up.

The Trust is co-governed and te ao Māori is integral to governance and operational support. Each project's unique mātauranga (knowledge) of site whakapapa (genealogy/history) and wairua (spirit) provides the framework for the manaakitanga (care) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) delivered through restoration activities. Restoration not only applies to the whenua (land) and ngahere (forest), but also the tangata (people) through building capability and capacity to continue the mahi (work) long term.

Ka ora te Whenua, ka ora te tangata.

The Kaimai Mamaku thrives; hence we thrive.

The Project has secured two major funders, but restoration projects require long-term investment that philanthropic support cannot provide. The Trust is driving the development of a biodiversity economy framework for corporate investment in 'biodiversity shares'. This allows businesses to invest in the restoration of ecosystem services on which all production depends.

Case Study:

Regeneration project resilient jobs for youth

The Puhinui Regeneration Project aims to connect and restore the land, waters and communities of the Puhinui stream and its catchment in South Auckland. It is carried out in collaboration with local mana whenua Te Waiohau, Eke Panuku, Te Pu-a-Nga Maara, local communities and the Sustainable Business Network.

An initial grant of \$1million from the Department of Conservation's Mahi mo te Taiao (Jobs for Nature) Fund enabled the creation and financing of jobs for local rangatahi (youth) to develop nature-based careers.

Z Energy also invested \$200,000 to further support training for youth, and provide the tools and resources required for the project. The project aligns with Z Energy's focus on the connections between people, climate change, nature and the importance of enhancing resilience in communities.

Abbie Bull is head of sustainability and community at Z Energy. She says: "You can't treat climate change, biodiversity loss and community resilience as separate issues. We need solutions that respond to these crises as an integrated whole".

The investment has created meaningful job opportunities for youth in South Auckland. Rangatahi (youth) are learning to become tiaki (protector) or guardians of the land, and some have left to start their own businesses in the industry.

How your organisation can take action for nature

The Regenerate Nature Programme will provide opportunities to learn how to take targeted action within your organisation.

For now, here are some initial links to investigate to help you start.

Investigate SBN's free [Nature Pathways](#) tool for business, farmers, growers and rural landowners

Complete SBN's free [Climate Action Toolbox](#)

Investigate SBN's [Circular Economy Directory](#) to find businesses that are offering sustainable products or services

Set simple nature targets for areas that are relevant for your organisation (and remember to monitor these), for example:

- *wood, paper and packaging supplied from sustainably managed forest e.g. Forest Stewardship Council standard*
- *waste reduction – food, plastics, landfill*
- *water use*
- *donation to nature-based community projects*
- *carbon emission reductions*

Implement sustainable sourcing practices in your supply chain - Take a look at [Docket](#), SBN's sustainable supply chain toolbox

Invest in local restoration and regeneration projects - [Contact](#) SBN to hear more about our partner projects

Post a challenge you are having to the [Challenge Hub](#) - Others may have a solution for you to use

Volunteer your time and skills - Get in touch with your [local volunteer centre](#) to see what nature projects are in your region and could use help

Share what you learn - All organisations are at different stages of their journey. Share what went well and what didn't go well.

Raise awareness and education for nature - With your employees, leadership teams, customers and other shareholders. [Talk to SBN](#) about one of our team coming into your company and running workshops on nature.

Advocate for policy and regulatory initiatives that support nature regeneration

Collaborate with communities, mana whenua, NGOs, government and others - Create partnerships to share knowledge, combine resources and create change. Reach out to your local DOC office, who will be able to point you in the right direction.

Join SBN in the Regenerate Nature programme and be part of transforming businesses' relationship with nature. Look at our on-the-ground project options: [Puhinui Regeneration Project](#), [Hauraki Gulf](#) and [Million Metres Streams](#)

Section 3: Nature investment in context

This section outlines the business and nature relationship within an Aotearoa New Zealand context. It highlights the business opportunities from taking nature action. It discusses many of the nature frameworks, policy and regulations that are relevant for businesses to understand. It analyses the current state of nature in Aotearoa New Zealand and the link between climate and nature.

Nature in Aotearoa New Zealand

[Box out]

“In Māori culture, nature and people are entwined through whakapapa, te reo, (the Māori language), tikanga (customs), the arts, food, rongoā (medicine) and spirituality. This relationship flows both ways – people are kaitiaki of the natural world and the natural world is kaitiaki of people. The loss of biodiversity and the growing distance between whānau, hapū, iwi, Māori communities and Treaty partners and what remains are making it harder to sustain relationships, responsibilities and practices”

Paragraph taken from [The Aotearoa Biodiversity Strategy – Te Mana o te Taiao 2020](#)

The world is currently experiencing an alarming decline in nature, surpassing any rates observed throughout human history. Out of the estimated eight million species inhabiting the Earth, up to one million are facing the threat of extinction.⁴ Since 1970, wildlife populations have declined by an average of 69%.⁵ Human activities are causing unprecedented alterations to the Earth’s surface, with approximately 75% of land environments and 66% of marine environments undergoing some form of change.⁶

Due to its relative isolation, Aotearoa New Zealand boasts remarkable biodiversity. However, it has the highest proportion of indigenous species at risk of extinction compared to any other country on Earth.⁷ More than 4,000 species in Aotearoa New Zealand have been designated as threatened or at risk of extinction.⁸ Sadly, the destruction of native forests, the draining of wetlands and the release of fertilisers and plastic pollution are examples of how human activity continues to contribute to the ongoing loss of valuable ecosystems. This is adversely affecting our wildlife, natural habitats and livelihoods.

It is crucial to recognise that the health of our economy and society hinges upon the wellbeing of nature. Our businesses and livelihoods rest and rely on the living world around us.⁹ However, our current understanding of nature and its services remains inadequate (Figure 5). This leads to undervaluation and insufficient investment in regenerating nature and safeguarding the services nature provides.

This info to be presented as a graphic

1. Provisioning services

Food, water, medicines, fuel and fibre

2. Supporting Service

Soil formation, nutrient cycling and photosynthesis

⁴ [IPBES](#)

⁵ [Living Nature Report 2022](#)

⁶ [IPBES](#)

⁷ [Beehive, December 2022](#)

⁸ [Predator Free 2050](#)

⁹ [Biodiversity in Aotearoa, DOC 2020](#)

3. Regulating services

Climate regulation, flood mitigation, erosion and disease control, and water purification

4. Cultural services

Cultural identity, mental and physical health, recreation and aesthetic

[\(Adapted from Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005\).](#)

Figure 5: Examples of ecosystem services that nature provides

In recent years, Aotearoa New Zealand has witnessed the detrimental consequences of environmental degradation on human wellbeing. Air pollution has resulted in significant health issues and premature deaths.¹⁰ The productivity of farms and crucial export markets are threatened by invasive species. Extreme weather events have impacted a significant proportion of the country. Their impacts on livelihoods have in some cases been catastrophic due to the absence of forest cover for erosion control and climate regulation.

“Human actions threaten more species with global extinction now than ever before.”

[- IPBES Global Assessment Report 2020](#)

Human actions are the primary driver of biodiversity loss. This includes how we do business. Research has identified five direct pressures on biodiversity:

- invasive species
- climate change
- land and sea use changes
- direct exploitation and harvesting
- pollution¹¹

These play a leading role in the decline of ecosystems and species worldwide. Indirect factors, such as government policies, technology and lack of finance also contribute to this decline.¹²

The majority of businesses rely on a thriving environment and its sustainable use. But, the prevailing business-as-usual model externalises the costs associated with nature. For example, most businesses create pollution of one form or another. The environment often bears impacts of this pollution, in the form of ecosystem degradation, the costs of which are not applied to the business. Consequently, we are witnessing a disconnection between people, the economy and nature. This carries serious risks and disruptions to business operations and value chains.¹³

Nevertheless, there remains a glimmer of hope. If we act now, transforming business practices and investing in nature, we can set nature on a path to recovery. Research indicates that businesses have a crucial role to play in driving nature regeneration,

¹⁰ [Stats NZ](#)

¹¹ [Biodiversity in Aotearoa, DOC 2020](#)

¹² [Te Mana o te Taiao](#)

¹³ [The Chairperson's Guide to Valuing Nature, World Economic Forum 2023](#)

positioning us on a trajectory towards recovery.¹⁴ Using technologies available today, business action can have a positive impact on forest cover loss, biodiversity loss, freshwater consumption, nutrient pollution and chemical and plastic pollution.¹⁵ Some businesses have taken the lead in championing nature and climate initiatives, serving as examples to follow.

Te ao Māori, the Māori worldview, highlights the interconnected relationship between all living species. Māori businesses are influenced by principles such as kaitiakitanga (guardianship), manaakitanga (hospitality, generosity, care, and giving), and whakapapa (genealogy and intergenerational connections). This calls for businesses to act as responsible guardians, embracing sustainability and making decisions that prioritise people, planet, purpose and profit.¹⁶

Across Aotearoa New Zealand, numerous community, indigenous, landowner and research groups are actively engaged in regenerating nature within their respective communities. These initiatives encompass a range of activities, including tree planting, predator control, research endeavours and systemic changes. They are aimed at collectively fostering thriving biodiversity, enhancing climate resilience and fostering community wellbeing. There have been many successful initiatives, such as predator eradication in specific areas, preventing extinctions and increased employment in nature-based careers. But we must acknowledge that there is still a long way to go. We continue to lose nature at an unprecedented rate.

Some leading businesses are implementing circular economy principles, nature strategies and nature-related targets into their business operations. Businesses are starting to identify nature-related risks and dependencies. The government is implementing regulations to reduce environmental damage. But we are just on the beginning of this journey.

To reverse the decline in biodiversity, a comprehensive and transformative approach is required, spanning technological, political, cultural, economic and social realms.¹⁷ This needs coordinated efforts from all sectors of society, including businesses, government, and communities. Adequate investment is crucial to enhance capabilities and secure additional funding for nature action throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

¹⁴ [Nature in the Balance: What companies can do to restore natural capital](#)

¹⁵ [Nature in the Balance: What companies can do to restore natural capital](#)

¹⁶ [Lessons to be learnt from Māori business values](#)

¹⁷ [IPBES](#)

The business opportunities from taking nature action

Investing in nature can have significant financial relevance for business in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Policy and compliance

In Aotearoa New Zealand we are seeing a string of nature-related policies undergoing reforms or implementation, for example [phasing out hard-to-recycle and single-use plastics](#). These will influence business operations. Investing in nature and getting ahead of regulatory changes can help businesses comply with these regulations, avoid penalties, save money and could build a competitive advantage over similar businesses.

Internationally, frameworks such as the [Global Biodiversity Framework](#), [Taskforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures](#) and [Science Based Targets for Nature](#) are coming online, showing the trend for business action for nature gaining momentum, at some speed.

Reputation

Businesses that contribute to environmental sustainability and conservation efforts are likely to enhance their reputation among stakeholders, including customers, investors, employees and communities.

There are indications that employees are more likely to stay at a company that undertakes positive nature action.¹⁸ Meanwhile, 67% of consumers say that “environmental health and the impact of their choices on the planet are important to them”.¹⁹ Companies that undertake nature action could open doors for access to additional funds and markets closed to businesses not taking action.

Mitigating risk

Certain sectors carry more risk due to their immediate dependence on nature to operate. These include agriculture, construction, food and beverages, forestry, fisheries, energy, tourism, retail, energy and water utilities.²⁰ But degrading ecosystems and biodiversity loss pose a degree of risk to all businesses. These risks are often hard to identify. This can lead to an underestimation or a denial that the business has nature-related risks at all.²¹

The impacts of these risks include examples such as:

- loss of workforce productivity, due to poor health and wellbeing
- increased costs from resource volatility throughout supply chains
- rising insurance costs

¹⁸ [Nature in the Balance: What companies can do to restore natural capital](#)

¹⁹ [Nature in the Balance: What companies can do to restore natural capital](#)

²⁰ [The Chairperson's Guide to Valuing Nature, World Economic Forum 2023](#)

²¹ [The Chairperson's Guide to Valuing Nature, World Economic Forum 2023](#)

- stranded assets²²

On the other hand, valuing and protecting nature can help build your company's resilience. Acting now provides opportunities to:

- reduce costs
- identify new business opportunities
- increase the social-environmental commitments of your business
- benefit from partnership and engagement with local communities and mana whenua

Resilient supply chains

When looking at where your business interacts with nature, it's important to consider each stage in the lifecycle of your product or service.

Many businesses depend on natural resources, such as timber and water, in this lifecycle. But often these dependencies are not fully understood. When a business identifies these dependencies and invests in the appropriate sustainable practices and nature conservation actions, they can help ensure the long-term availability and quality of these resources. This enhances supply chain resilience. It reduces the vulnerability to price volatility, shortages and reputational risks associated with unsustainable resource extraction.

Collaboration

Investing in nature often involves collaboration and partnerships between businesses, NGOs, government agencies, mana whenua and local communities. By engaging in such partnerships, businesses can access additional expertise, resources and funding opportunities. Collaborative initiatives can lead to shared benefits, learning opportunities, reduced costs and achievement of varied environment, social and cultural goals.

New business opportunities

A recent study, [‘Nature in the Balance: What companies can do to restore natural capital’](#), found that companies’ actions could not only reverse the trend of nature loss, “but also generate a positive return on investment in a substantial number of cases”. A company that invests in nature can unlock new opportunities for innovation and growth. This could be through technology or service opportunities.

²² [The Chairperson’s Guide to Valuing Nature, World Economic Forum 2023](#)

The interconnected issues of nature and climate change

“The issues of climate and nature are closely intertwined. Addressing the natural-capital challenge is crucial to mitigating climate change, while addressing climate change could help avert or delay several emerging nature-related tipping points.”

[McKinsey & Company, Nature in the Balance](#)

The New Zealand government has committed to ‘net zero’²³ by 2050. This means transitioning to a more resilient, low emissions economy.²⁴

It is important that businesses realise that to reach net zero and achieve their climate targets, nature actions need to be intrinsically linked and incorporated into plans and strategies. In fact, many nature targets will help businesses to achieve their climate goals.²⁵ For example deforestation policies.

The inter-connected biodiversity and climate crises are interacting in complex and challenging ways. They are threatening the health and wellbeing of all species, including our own. Climate change will worsen the impacts of nature loss and negatively impact communities. Increasingly, there will be species and ecosystems within Aotearoa New Zealand that will not be able to adapt to the changing climate.²⁶

The protection and restoration of natural ecosystems has a vital role in regulating weather and mitigating the effects of climatic events on vulnerable communities. In Aotearoa New Zealand we have already seen the effects the combined biodiversity and climate crises have on our environment and business. The recent Auckland Anniversary Day floods and Cyclone Gabrielle events caused catastrophic losses to businesses, as well as disruptions to day-to-day business activities. The removal of forest and the lack of riparian planting exacerbated increased sediment flow from land, to freshwater and ocean ecosystems. This has detrimental effects to the economy and livelihoods in the affected areas.²⁷

By understanding and addressing the intertwined nature and climate crises, businesses can contribute to a more sustainable future, while ensuring they are futureproofing themselves and building resilience.

²³ *other than for biogenic methane

²⁴ [MBIE](#)

²⁵ [Nature in the Balance: What companies can do to restore natural capital](#)

²⁶ [Environment Aotearoa 2022](#)

²⁷ [Outrage to Optimism, Ministerial Inquiry](#)

Investing in nature is good business

By recognising and valuing nature's contributions, businesses can ensure long-term sustainability, reduce risks, enhance their brand reputation and unlock new opportunities for innovation and growth.²⁸

The world's economy is embedded in nature. We depend on healthy functioning ecosystems for healthy functioning businesses. A recent report from PwC attributes more than half of the world's GDP, roughly US\$58 trillion, as “highly or moderately dependent on nature”, with the other half having some reliance.²⁹

Although some industries rely on nature more obviously than others, all businesses need nature to survive.³⁰ In Aotearoa New Zealand the success, or otherwise, of the agriculture sector is most obviously and directly linked to soil quality, erosion control, water and pollination. Tourism is clearly linked to natural places of beauty for recreation services as well as materials to build infrastructure. But beyond that, every business is entirely dependent on nature or the services nature provides for its existence. Having a healthy workforce and not being regularly impacted by extreme weather events are just two examples. Halting degenerative business practices and protecting and restoring nature will have direct benefits for Aotearoa New Zealand's economic wellbeing and prosperity.

A tangible example of the potential costs of increased natural disasters and environmental breakdown came after Cyclone Gabrielle in Tairāwhiti. 730 business support grants were distributed to businesses in the region to “help address immediate cash flow issues related to customer access, supply chain issues or inability to operate as usual due to cyclone damage.”³¹ The impact of the cyclone and associated poor land use decisions, such as removal of riparian and forested areas, meant that large landslides caused connectivity and water issues for the region, including businesses. Every business was asked to urgently assess their reliance on water and make plans to operate in water alert levels for an extended period of time.

Business plays a vital role in investing in on-the-ground restoration and regeneration projects. Investments provide support for the protection of endangered species, the restoration of ecosystems and support communities. These investments are often delivered through partnerships and collaborations with conservation organisations. These organisations have a wealth of knowledge and skill and can work with businesses on knowledge sharing, innovative solutions and community engagement.

In Aotearoa New Zealand we are seeing the social and environmental impacts of investing in nature through the government's [Jobs for Nature Programme](#). This investment of \$1.19 billion has supported 469 projects. With the programme coming to the end of its funding period, many conservation organisations, across all regions, are looking for further investment to

²⁸ [Nature in the Balance: What companies can do to restore natural capital](#)

²⁹ [Managing Nature Risk, PWC](#)

³⁰ [The Chairperson's Guide to Valuing Nature, World Economic Forum 2023](#)

³¹ [Trust Tairāwhiti](#)

continue the positive biodiversity and social outcomes delivered over the last three years. This is a role that the private sector can play.

The other key role businesses play in nature regeneration is through transforming their business practices. By transforming production and consumption systems to reduce waste and pollutants, we put less pressure on nature by reducing many of the main pressures (land and sea use changes, direct exploitation and harvesting, pollution). By moving to a system where products are kept in circulation, rather than a take-make-waste system, we can both halt and reverse nature loss. There are pockets of businesses already undertaking action in this area, but there is a need to upskill and integrate regenerative practices into all businesses.

Frameworks, policy and regulations – what’s coming for business

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity 15th conference of the parties (COP15) was held in December 2022. The New Zealand Government signed the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF). Governments around the world sent a clear message to businesses that now is the time to act for nature.

“It is the first time in a multi-lateral agreement that governments have committed so explicitly of what they expect from business on nature.”

[Business for Nature](#)

The Framework has been frequently called the ‘Paris Agreement’ for nature. It contains four long-term goals for 2050 and 23 targets that set the global biodiversity action agenda through to 2030. It highlights the transformational action needed from all of society to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

Within this framework, [Target 15](#) expects the New Zealand Government to implement measures that require large businesses and financial institutions to assess and disclose their risks, impacts and dependencies on nature, while encouraging other businesses to follow suit.

Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 – Te Mana o te Taiao

[Te Mana o te Taiao](#) provides the strategic direction for the protection, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity in Aotearoa New Zealand. This strategy was designed with representatives across the biodiversity system, including business.

The role of businesses in implementing the strategy is to recognise the importance of biodiversity, integrate it into their operations and decision-making processes and take proactive measures to conserve and enhance biodiversity within their spheres of influence. By doing so, businesses can contribute to the broader national effort to protect Aotearoa New Zealand's unique ecosystems and species.

Aotearoa New Zealand Waste Strategy

The [Aotearoa New Zealand Waste Strategy](#) is a 30-year roadmap to a ‘low-emissions, low-waste society built upon a circular economy’. It is accompanied by a current [Waste Legislation Reform](#) that will see stronger regulations around reducing waste. This will impact all businesses in Aotearoa New Zealand across many aspects of operations, from production to packaging. Businesses should have an understanding of the strategy and start to consider how they can transition to stay ahead of regulations and minimise costs.

The strategy asks businesses to:

- “Rethink and redesign your processes, products and packaging to reduce waste.
- Keep up to date with what your industry is doing to reduce waste.
- Push for, and take part in, voluntary or mandatory product stewardship schemes.
- Work with local community groups and non-governmental organisations on initiatives to reduce waste.
- Hold your business and industry to account by systematically measuring and reporting on progress.”

On 1 July 2023 the Government phased out the use of plastic produce bags, plates, bowls, cutlery, straws and produce labels. This is a great example of how legislation can have an impact on business. Those who adapt and find alternatives before legislation comes into effect can have a smoother transition to the new regulatory requirements.

New Zealand Director Duties to Manage Nature-Related Risk and Impact on Natural Capital – Legal Opinion 2023

The legal opinion report titled "[New Zealand Director Duties to Manage Nature-Related Risk and Impact on Natural Capital - Legal Opinion 2023](#)" highlights that New Zealand company directors have a responsibility to consider nature-related risks in their decision-making processes.

The report emphasises the need for directors to ensure their businesses proactively identify and evaluate foreseeable and material risks associated with nature. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of incorporating these risks into the decision-making framework.

Climate Policy: Emissions Reduction Plan and National Adaptation Plan

The New Zealand Government's [Emissions Reduction Plan](#) and [National Adaptation Plan](#) recognise the critical role of nature in addressing climate change and building resilience.

The plans emphasise the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems as a means to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the changing climate. Nature-based solutions such as reforestation, wetland restoration and sustainable land management are promoted to sequester carbon, enhance biodiversity and improve water management.

These plans prioritise the integration of nature into climate change strategies, recognising its potential to provide multiple benefits, including carbon storage, flood protection and enhanced ecosystem services, thereby contributing to a sustainable and climate-resilient future.

Taskforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures

The [Taskforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures \(TNFD\)](#) is a framework for organisations to report and act on nature-related risks and impacts. When released at the

end of 2023, it will highlight nature-related risks within organisations and enable transparent and informed decision-making to mitigate these risks.

In Aotearoa New Zealand there are a range of complementary initiatives underway to pilot, input into the development of, and understand the impact of, TNFD from an Aotearoa New Zealand perspective. For example, The Aotearoa Circle is running a TNFD boot camp for its member organisations. Beca and Ministry for the Environment are co-sponsoring a pilot through [Creative HQ's Impact Accelerator programme](#).

In 2021, Aotearoa New Zealand became one of the first jurisdictions to mandate [climate-related disclosures mandatory](#) for large publicly listed companies and financial institutions. We could see a requirement for TNFD-aligned reporting standards and disclosures following closely behind.

Science Based Targets Network

[Science Based Targets for Nature \(SBTN\)](#) is a framework that aims to address the urgent need for nature regeneration by providing science-based guidelines for businesses. The framework integrates scientific knowledge and collaboration across sectors. It aims to drive positive change, mitigate biodiversity loss and promote sustainable development.

The first release provides guidance on how businesses can measure their contribution to freshwater and land. Further releases will tackle other nature-related targets.

Resource Management Reform

The Government is reforming the Resource Management Act 1991 and replacing it with three new Acts: [Natural and Built Environments Bill](#), [Climate Adaptation Act](#) and [Spatial Planning Bill](#). These Acts will support development within environmental limits – protecting and restoring the natural environment.

It is hard to quantify what effect these new pieces of legislation will have on business yet, that depends on the political party elected in 2023 and the final content of the legislation. But there are indications of stronger monitoring and reporting requirements on environmental impacts, stricter compliance and less allowance for adverse effects on the environment.

National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS-IB)

The objective of the [National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity \(NPS-IB\)](#) is “to maintain indigenous biodiversity across Aotearoa New Zealand so that there is at least no overall loss in indigenous biodiversity”.

This policy statement states that certain activities that cause adverse effects on Significant Natural Areas need to be avoided. This could affect developers, forestry and farming sectors for example. It also requires regional councils to develop and implement a regional biodiversity strategy, in line with the national biodiversity strategy.

Biodiversity Credit System

On 7 July 2023, the Government released a discussion document to explore whether a [biodiversity credit system](#) could incentivise and fund biodiversity action.

International

Internationally, governments are getting prepared to report on progress made on the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework at the 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference.

In 2025, the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service \(IPBES\)](#) is publishing an assessment on business and biodiversity. This aims to identify how businesses impact and depend on nature and people, while identifying ways to measure this. This will provide business more knowledge to act to achieve international biodiversity goals.

This report owes its existence to the invaluable contributions and unwavering dedication of individuals and organisations committed to enhancing the wellbeing of our planet for future generations of humans and other species. I extend my sincere gratitude to all the survey respondents, workshop participants, individuals and case study organisations that generously shared their time, expertise and insights. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my esteemed colleagues at SBN who are all driven by the shared mission of leaving a lasting positive impact on our planet. Moreover, thank you to our foundation partners, Ministry for the Environment and Z Energy. Your knowledge and insights have helped us to collectively provide the strategic direction to the programme and to get it where it is today.

Sam Rowland

Programme Manager, Nature Systems Change

Sam leads SBN's work to accelerate the capability and action for nature in Aotearoa New Zealand. She has an extensive background working with nature, implementing national programmes focusing on monitoring and metrics, strategy, and investment for nature. Sam is actively involved with grassroots community conservation and sustainability organisations establishing opportunities for people to be connected to nature and learn what they can do to help. She has worked with businesses at a local and national scale to create opportunities to learn and connect around sustainability.

Foundation Partners

[MfE and Z Energy Logo]