



# Making Change in Policy

Tools and Strategies for Policymakers to  
Make Biodiversity a Shared Priority



PLANET4B

POLICYMAKERS

# Foreword

Biodiversity is increasingly referenced in strategies and commitments. Yet this recognition does not automatically translate into everyday policy practice. In many institutions, biodiversity is still associated mainly with conservation or compliance, and is not yet seen as relevant to finance, planning, infrastructure, economic development or health. As a result, it may be acknowledged at the strategic level, but not fully considered in the day-to-day decisions that shape regulation.

Across ministries, agencies and governance levels, biodiversity also carries different meanings. For some it relates to nature protection; for others to rural livelihoods, climate adaptation or cultural identity. These understandings are all valid – but when they remain unconnected, coordination and shared action become difficult.

The challenge is therefore twofold: to strengthen shared understanding, and to make biodiversity actionable within existing roles, priorities and policy processes.

This guide is for policymakers working to ensure that biodiversity is not only acknowledged, but actively integrated into agenda-setting, everyday decisions and resource allocation. It draws on insights from [PLANET4B](#), which worked with public institutions, communities and businesses to understand how biodiversity can be prioritised in decision-making.

This guide offers tools for:

- Framing biodiversity in ways that build shared language and relevance across sectors
- Aligning biodiversity with existing policy priorities, rather than creating new ones
- Introducing small, feasible steps that demonstrate value
- Anchoring progress structurally, so it endures beyond individual champions or project cycles

The aim is to support realistic, steady and durable progress – starting from where things already are and adjusting the conditions for biodiversity to grow into a shared and actionable policy priority.

We hope you find this guide useful in your work to shape policies that sustain the well-being of people and the living world we depend on.

***The PLANET4B Coordination Team***

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# What Policymakers Identify as Key Barriers to Prioritising Biodiversity

Across consultations undertaken during the PLANET4B project, policymakers noted that biodiversity often struggles to gain practical traction not only because of structural factors, but also because political commitment can be limited or uneven. In some contexts, biodiversity is seen as a secondary concern, a compliance matter, or an issue that can be deferred. This means that both systemic conditions (such as mandates, workloads and procedures) and political priorities (what is seen as urgent, visible or advantageous) shape what becomes possible in practice.

Several consistent themes emerged:

- Biodiversity is understood and spoken about differently across sectors, which makes shared action more complex.
- Policy agendas often focus on issues that appear more immediate or easier to measure and justify.

- Workloads and administrative procedures make it difficult to consider biodiversity unless it can be connected to existing tasks.
- Progress frequently relies on individual champions, which makes biodiversity gains vulnerable to turnover or shifting priorities.

These barriers can be addressed through shared language, alignment of priorities, small strategic steps, and structural anchoring – all of which this guide supports.

This landscape means that progress requires both strategic communication and framing to build commitment and shared understanding. It also requires practical policy entry points that make biodiversity easier to act on within existing roles, processes and constraints.

The next section focuses on how to communicate biodiversity inside government in ways that strengthen commitment, create alignment and make collaboration possible.

Table 1: Barriers Policymakers Highlighted during PLANET4B Consultations

|  Barrier |  What This Looks Like in Practice |  Impact on Biodiversity Action |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Uneven political commitments                                                                | Biodiversity is treated as optional, symbolic, or secondary to economic or crisis agendas.                           | Limited prioritisation, weak mandates, and little support for implementation.                                      |
| Different understandings of biodiversity across sectors                                     | Ministries and agencies use different terms, framings and assumptions.                                               | Coordination becomes slow; misunderstandings and duplication occur.                                                |
| Competing policy priorities and crisis agendas                                              | Economic stability, energy, health and climate often dominate attention.                                             | Biodiversity becomes secondary, postponed or reframed as “later” work.                                             |
| Limited administrative capacity and time                                                    | Staff manage high workloads; new tasks feel unmanageable.                                                            | Biodiversity integration is perceived as “additional work”, not built-in.                                          |
| Fragmented mandates and unclear responsibility                                              | Several departments share responsibility without a single lead.                                                      | Progress depends on personal initiative and can stall without coordination.                                        |
| Short policy cycles and leadership turnover                                                 | Political and staffing changes reset priorities and direction.                                                       | Gains are fragile unless they are structurally embedded.                                                           |

**Table 1: (continued)**

|  <b>Barrier</b> |  <b>What This Looks Like in Practice</b>                         |  <b>Impact on Biodiversity Action</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Few visible, feasible examples</b>                                                            | Proposals can appear abstract, complex or large-scale.                                                                                            | Decision-makers hesitate to commit without proven precedents.                                                           |
| <b>Biodiversity often framed as cost rather than value</b>                                       | Economic and performance narratives override ecosystem considerations.                                                                            | Biodiversity is deprioritised unless linked to resilience, efficiency or opportunity.                                   |
| <b>Uncertainty around measurement, indicator mismatch, unclear reporting requirements</b>        | Biodiversity benefits are often local, long-term or qualitative, while available indicators and reporting expectations are unclear or mismatched. | Action slows when reporting requirements are unclear.                                                                   |

## Current Frames of Biodiversity Inside Policy

Because biodiversity is understood differently across sectors, how it is communicated inside institutions matters. Communication in this context is rather about creating shared understanding so that different departments and policy domains can work together more easily.

### Biodiversity Holds Different Meanings Across Policy Areas

Research in PLANET4B shows that biodiversity is understood in multiple ways depending on policy context, professional background and institutional roles. Across the project's 11 case studies, interviews and discourse analysis, biodiversity appeared differently.

Biodiversity is not one concept with one meaning. Rather, it carries different significance depending on sectoral priorities and institutional mandates. These meanings are not wrong – but often they are fragmented and if they remain unconnected, shared action is difficult.

The communication task, therefore, is not to unify the meaning, but to make the different interpretations visible and connectable.

**Table 2: Meanings of Biodiversity in Different Policy Areas**

| <b>Policy Domain / Actor Group</b>       | <b>How Biodiversity Appears to be Commonly Understood</b>                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Environment / Conservation               | As the protection and recovery of species, habitats and ecological processes.                                                                                             |
| Agriculture & Rural Development          | Biodiversity as part of the conditions that sustain productive and liveable rural environments, including continuity of landscapes, livelihoods and knowledge traditions. |
| Water, Infrastructure & Spatial Planning | As part of how landscapes function, influencing flood risk, erosion, and the organisation of space, influencing how environments support everyday life.                   |
| Climate & Adaptation Policy              | As a resource that supports stability and resilience in the face of climate change.                                                                                       |
| Culture & Education                      | As heritage, identity and belonging to place.                                                                                                                             |
| Finance & Economic Policy                | Biodiversity as connected to financial long-term stability and risk, though often under-recognised due to reporting gaps and cognitive biases.                            |

# Moving Biodiversity Across Policy Silos and Decision Processes

Biodiversity is not yet widely recognised as a practical policy concern in many institutions. In numerous ministries, agencies and local authorities, biodiversity remains associated primarily with nature conservation or environmental compliance, and is not yet seen as relevant to finance, planning, agriculture, economic development, health or infrastructure work.

Awareness and concern are therefore uneven, and biodiversity often appears less urgent, less measurable, or less politically visible than other priorities. Even where interest exists, biodiversity does not map neatly onto existing mandates, planning cycles, justification language or performance indicators.

The task is therefore twofold:

1. Build shared understanding of how biodiversity relates to policy areas beyond nature conservation.

2. Translate biodiversity into the decision processes and justification logics that institutions already use.

This section provides practical guidance on actions that policy actors can take, to help turn abstract biodiversity-related challenges in tangible actions, so biodiversity can become actionable rather than symbolic.

## Framing Biodiversity in the Language of Mandates

Biodiversity gains practical traction when it is presented as strengthening goals that policymakers are already responsible for, rather than as an additional or competing priority. Make biodiversity relevant by showing how it enhances what other sectors already protect, manage or justify.

**Table 3: How to Frame Biodiversity to Align with Sectoral Mandates**

| When speaking with...             | Emphasise how biodiversity supports...                   | Because...                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Finance & Economic Policy Units   | Stability over long-term risk and uncertainty            | Decision processes are shaped by budget cycles and risk horizons.                    |
| Agriculture & Rural Development   | Continuity of rural futures and viable landscapes        | Biodiversity is embedded in practices of care, heritage, production and stewardship. |
| Spatial / Regional Planning       | Quality, identity and functionality of places            | Planning determines how landscapes are lived, experienced and valued.                |
| Climate & Adaptation Teams        | Resilience and flexibility under changing conditions     | Biodiversity strengthens the system’s capacity to respond over time.                 |
| Trade & External Relations        | Fair, stable and legitimate cooperation                  | Biodiversity underpins long-term credibility and shared benefit in partnerships.     |
| Education / Cultural Institutions | Belonging, shared responsibility and meaningful learning | Values and identities shift through cultural engagement and collective experience.   |

## Inserting Biodiversity into Existing Decision Mechanisms

Integration does not necessarily require new procedures. Rather, it requires positioning biodiversity where decision-making processes are already operating.

**Table 4: Fitting Biodiversity into Existing Mechanisms**

| Policy Mechanism                               | How Biodiversity Fits                                                                       | Applies to                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Impact assessments / strategic reviews         | Treat biodiversity as a <b>dependency</b> and <b>risk factor</b> , not only an outcome.     | National ministries, EC DGs, regional and local authorities |
| Budget / programme justification text          | Frame biodiversity as <b>future cost avoidance</b> and <b>stability in implementation</b> . | Ministries, municipalities, budget processes                |
| Inter-ministerial / inter-service coordination | Use biodiversity to demonstrate <b>alignment of policy goals</b> across sectors.            | All levels of government                                    |
| Regional development & cohesion funding        | Link biodiversity to <b>territorial resilience</b> and durable investment value.            | Regions, cohesion agencies, planning authorities            |
| Land-use / spatial planning processes          | Position biodiversity as part of <b>how places function and support well-being</b> .        | Local and regional planning bodies                          |

## Choose the Framing Based on the Decision Context

Different decision settings use different evaluation logics. Framing biodiversity as an *opportunity* can help build alliances, while *stability / resilience* framing may be more effective in formal decision procedures.

**Table 5: Fitting Biodiversity into Existing Decision Contexts**

| Setting                                                            | Effective Framing                                     | Why                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic planning, cooperation, partnership building              | Opportunity, continuity, viable futures               | Builds alignment and shared purpose.                       |
| Legislative drafting, budget justification, regulatory evaluations | Risk reduction, stability, resilience, cost avoidance | Matches the formal language of approval and justification. |

## When Encountering Resistance

Capacity constraints are an important factor with high workloads, tight planning cycles and crowded policy agendas. When a colleague says “We do not have capacity for this”, it does not automatically mean:

- they are opposed to biodiversity, or
- they believe it is unimportant.

More often, it means:

- it is not yet clear where biodiversity fits in their existing responsibilities, or
- they cannot yet see how it would be implemented without adding work.

Repeating the case for biodiversity rarely shifts this. What does help is shifting the conversation from why to where.

☹️ Instead of asking:

“Could you please include biodiversity in your process?”

😊 it is worth asking:

“At which step in your workflow is environmental or risk information already reviewed?”

“Is there a template, form, or justification note where this could be added without creating a new task?”

“Which decisions in your process have longer-term consequences where resilience or continuity is already discussed?”

“Would it help if we provided language, examples or text you could adapt rather than having to develop it?”

These questions do three things at once:

- They respect the colleague’s constraints – this avoids defensiveness or perceived pressure
- They locate integration within existing work – this makes biodiversity *practical* and *feasible*
- They invite collaboration rather than delegation – this builds internal ownership instead of transferring responsibility.

**Table 6: Examples of What “Fit” Can Look Like in Practice**

| Context                         | What this looks like                                                                                                | Result                                                                  |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Finance Ministry / Treasury     | Adding one sentence on biodiversity risk to existing budget justification templates                                 | No new process <i>and</i> biodiversity becomes part of fiscal rationale |
| Agriculture Ministry / CAP Unit | Referencing biodiversity under “continuity of land use and rural livelihoods” in guidance notes                     | Biodiversity is seen as part of sustaining agricultural futures         |
| Spatial Planning Department     | Adding biodiversity criteria to existing checklists                                                                 | Biodiversity becomes part of evaluating “quality of place”              |
| European Commission DGs         | Adding biodiversity as a dependency and risk variable in an Impact Assessment problem definition                    | Biodiversity enters the decision logic before proposals are finalised   |
| Local Authority                 | Referencing biodiversity under “long-term maintenance and public amenity value” in park and infrastructure planning | Biodiversity aligns with public services and community well-being       |

## The Shift in One Sentence

Instead of asking for *more work*, help colleagues identify where biodiversity already belongs in the work they are doing. This is where progress becomes possible – even in constrained institutional settings.

## Why This May Work

The approaches outlined here can be effective because they match how institutions and individuals actually make decisions, and how systems-level conditions can be addressed.

Our research shows that people and organisations act when biodiversity is:

- Relevant to goals they already hold
- Feasible within existing processes and time constraints
- Legitimate because others are also doing it
- Supported structurally, not dependent on individual advocacy.

The behavioural and decision-making theories below help explain why these patterns emerge and how they can be supported in practice.

**Table 7: Approaches and their Implication for Policy, based on Relevant Theories**

| Approach                                                           | Relevant Insight / Theory                                                                                                                               | Implication for Policy Practice                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Align biodiversity with existing mandates and priorities           | <b>Ajzen – Theory of Planned Behaviour:</b> People are more likely to act when the behaviour feels meaningful, socially supported, and doable for them. | Position biodiversity as strengthening goals already held (stability, continuity, resilience), not as a new or competing agenda.                                                                              |
| Fit biodiversity into current planning and decision procedures     | <b>Michie – COM-B:</b> Change is easier when capability, opportunity and motivation are already present.                                                | Integration is most effective when biodiversity is inserted into <b>existing templates, coordination steps, and review stages</b> , rather than creating parallel processes.                                  |
| Use visible examples to make biodiversity seem shared and expected | <b>Cialdini – Social Norms:</b> People take cues from what others in similar roles are doing.                                                           | Small internal precedents and peer examples are more influential than general awareness campaigns.                                                                                                            |
| Anchor progress in routines, roles and institutional rules         | <b>Ostrom – Institutional Governance:</b> Stable change depends on shared rules, not individual initiative alone.                                       | Embedding biodiversity into checklists, justification notes, design standards and budgeting logic sustains action through turnover and election cycles.                                                       |
| Support confidence and reduce perceived risk                       | <b>Bandura – Self-Efficacy:</b> People act when they believe they can do so.                                                                            | Start with <b>low-risk, feasible steps</b> that demonstrate success and build confidence.                                                                                                                     |
| Sustain motivation over time                                       | <b>Deci &amp; Ryan – Self-Determination Theory:</b> Motivation is maintained when people feel autonomy, competence and shared purpose.                  | Use <b>collaborative and invitational framing</b> , not obligation-based demands.                                                                                                                             |
| Match framing to the evaluation logic of the decision setting      | <b>Kahneman &amp; Tversky – Prospect Theory:</b> How a proposal is framed shapes how it is perceived in approval processes.                             | Use <b>opportunity and shared benefit</b> framing in collaboration settings; use <b>stability, cost avoidance and resilience</b> framing in formal decision reviews (e.g., funding, programme justification). |

What this means in practice:

- People commit when biodiversity supports goals they already work for.
- Action begins when the first step feels manageable and safe to try.
- Legitimacy spreads when examples are visible and shared.
- Progress lasts when it is written into systems, not held by individuals.

### Shift in how Biodiversity is Positioned:

- “Environmental add-on” → Condition for stable, resilient policy outcomes
- Competing priority → Cross-cutting enabling factor
- Project-based effort → Routine institutional practice
- Individual advocacy → Shared ownership
- “Not my responsibility” → Shared responsibility

Biodiversity becomes actionable when it feels relevant, doable, shared and embedded.

## Practical Tools for Advancing Biodiversity in Policy Work

The tools below help introduce biodiversity without increasing workloads, shifting discussions from *why* biodiversity matters to *where* it fits in everyday policy work.

These steps correspond to the five change pathways identified in PLANET4B: Legitimacy → People → Relevance → Visible Wins → Anchoring.

### Legitimacy Signals (Permission & Framing)

These phrases help position biodiversity as a valid and shared policy concern, rather than an environmental add-on.

Useful messages for meetings or documents

“Let’s consider biodiversity alongside climate and development resilience.”

“This is not new work – it strengthens outcomes we are already responsible for.”

“We already manage landscapes, water, public space and food systems – biodiversity influences all of these.”

Where to use

- Agenda-setting for inter-service meetings
- Strategy introductions / communication notes
- Cabinet briefings and justification texts

Effect: Opens institutional space to act by signalling permission and mandate alignment.

### Identify and Connect Internal Allies (People Who Care)

Progress does not require everyone to agree. It begins when a small cross-unit cluster coordinates informally.

Useful phrasing:

“Who else in your unit works on landscape, resilience or community well-being?”

“Shall we keep each other updated on when biodiversity might fit into our upcoming work?”

Where to use

- Informal follow-up conversations
- Coordination chats between departments

Effect: Creates a practical network of ownership, not a new committee.

### **Make Biodiversity Relevant to Their Mandate (Experiential Connection)**

Instead of *explaining biodiversity*, focus on what it does in the context of the colleague's own goals. This is about showing that biodiversity already exists inside the problems they are trying to solve.

If they work on Land or infrastructure planning

**"Biodiversity affects how places function – this is about landscape performance."**

If they work on Agriculture / food / rural development

**"This supports the continuity of viable land use and cultural landscapes."**

If they work on Budgeting or programme evaluation

**"This reduces long-term implementation risk and future maintenance burden."**

If they work on Social or health policy

**"This shapes everyday well-being and access to quality public space."**

Effect: Moves biodiversity from "extra work" → relevant and useful.

### **Start Small, Make It Visible (Visible Wins)**

One small precedent has more impact than a large, planned reform.

Concrete actions:

- Add one sentence on biodiversity to a planning rationale or funding justification.
- Include biodiversity as one criterion in an existing checklist.
- Begin with one pilot site, neighbourhood or policy file, not policy-wide integration.

Useful sentence for documents:

**"This strengthens continuity and resilience of the system conditions on which implementation depends."**

Effect: Demonstrates feasibility → builds trust → others copy.

### **Anchor Gradually in Systems (Anchoring in Systems)**

When something has been tried and accepted, write it into routine structures.

Add biodiversity to:

- Inter-service coordination agendas (standing discussion point)
- Planning and procurement templates
- Monitoring and reporting guidance
- Role descriptions when positions are updated.

Gradual is essential: anchoring too early feels imposed; anchoring too late risks losses when staff or priorities shift.

**Overall, start small, speak in sector language, demonstrate one visible success, then embed it into existing routines.**

## Practice Example from PLANET4B:

### Bio-/Diverse Edible City Graz – How Municipal Buy-In Developed for More (Inclusive) Green Spaces

In Graz, Austria, several community garden and food initiatives existed, but they were unconnected and involved mostly socially advantaged groups. Biodiversity appeared indirectly in some city strategies (green space, recreation and quality of life), while social inclusion and food justice were acknowledged separately in policy discussions. These agendas, however, were not linked in practice, and cross-departmental cooperation to connect biodiversity, good food and inclusive green space development only occurred in a few project-based cases.

The PLANET4B case Bio-/Diverse Edible City Graz addressed this gap through two Learning Communities:

- A Policy Learning Community with municipal staff from environment, parks, social affairs, and spatial planning, alongside different NGOs, activists and experts.
- A Citizen Learning Community of women experiencing social and economic precarity who co-designed a new edible community garden (GAIA Gartenberg).

What follows shows how municipal buy-in developed step-by-step, aligned with the five pathways in this guide.

#### 1) Legitimacy: Biodiversity Framed as Linked to Existing Responsibilities

Instead of presenting biodiversity as an “environmental” issue, the Learning Communities highlighted how a biodiverse edible garden would contribute to social inclusion, climate adaptation, and neighbourhood liveability – all of which were already on the agenda for different municipal departments.

This made biodiversity feel legitimate to discuss – rather than a new agenda that needed new justification with the momentum from Graz’s developing biodiversity strategy reinforcing this.

#### 2) Small Coalition of Allies: A Cross-Department Team Formed

The Policy Learning Community created a practical discussion space for municipal staff and other actors. These conversations helped staff see connections between themes and roles, and identify synergies without the need for a new task force – building and supporting relationships.

This informal, trust-based group:

- Enabled staff from different departments and fields to understand each other’s perspectives.
- Identified where procedures were unintentionally blocking participation of less privileged groups
- Established a shared sense of purpose.

#### 3) Make Biodiversity Relevant to Mandates

Each department saw its *own interest* in the initiative. Biodiversity became meaningful because it supported goals for which they were already accountable.

**Table 8: Actors’ interest and their Alignment to Biodiversity**

| Actor               | What mattered to them                                | How biodiversity aligned                                        |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Green Space / Parks | Maintaining attractive, resilient green spaces       | Diverse plantings = lower maintenance + higher ecological value |
| Social Affairs      | Inclusion and well-being of marginalised groups      | Shared gardening created safe, supportive community spaces      |
| Planning            | Improving neighbourhood quality and public space use | Edible and biodiverse spaces enhanced identity + liveability    |

#### **4) Visible Small Win: One Pilot Site Becoming a Demonstration**

The GAIA Gartenberg Garden was small, local and tangible. It allowed municipal staff to see results directly, including:

- Strong community ownership
- Improved access to nature for women previously excluded from green spaces
- A biodiverse landscape that felt *lived in*, not symbolic.

The pilot reduced perceived risk by showing that citizens could manage and care for green spaces effectively. It also demonstrated that integrating biodiversity was both feasible and beneficial. As a result, additional follow-up initiatives were launched, and the site became a testbed also for climate change adaptation.

#### **5) Institutional Anchoring: Alignment Turned into Procedural Support**

Once trust and confidence were established, the municipality made decisive adjustments:

- The Green Space Department provided materials and practical maintenance support
- Coordination pathways between social affairs and parks staff were regularised
- The edible community park model was referenced in ongoing urban development considerations (integrated into the City Development Plan and the Sectoral Plan for Green Spaces).

No new department. No major restructuring.

Just relatively small shifts in how routine responsibilities were carried out – the exact form of institutional anchoring this guide recommends.

#### **Key Takeaway**

Municipal buy-in emerged because senior departmental leadership was engaged early on, saw biodiversity connected to their own mandates, witnessed a small visible success, and could then anchor it through small procedural shifts. The change did not start with a biodiversity argument but rather finding the common ground. Early conversations created recognition of relevance, reduced barriers for staff participation, and ensured that the work entered into institutional consciousness from the start. External recognition (EU project affiliation) further reinforced legitimacy and shared pride.

# Embedding Biodiversity into Structures and Cycles (Ensuring Continuity)

Even when promising initiatives begin, biodiversity integration often remains vulnerable to turnover, shifting priorities and project-based funding. PLANET4B showed that progress is most at risk when it depends on single champions, temporary political goodwill, or standalone commitments.

To ensure durability, biodiversity needs to become part of the ordinary way institutions work – not a special effort.

## Why Continuity Is Challenging

Policymakers pointed to several structural factors that interrupt momentum:

- Short political cycles reshape priorities before initiatives mature.
- Staff rotations and reorganisation dissolve informal alliances.
- Project-based funding encourages pilots rather than stable practice.
- Siloed mandates make shared responsibility uncertain.

These conditions are normal in public institutions. The task is not to be blocked by them, but to design biodiversity integration that can withstand them.

## What Helps Biodiversity Endure Over Time

Across our findings, three stabilisers consistently supported continuity:

### 1. Routine Embedding

Biodiversity becomes part of *existing* procedures – procurement guidance, planning checklists, programme justification notes, evaluation criteria.

### 2. Shared Ownership

Progress lasts when it is held by more than one unit. Cross-department micro-teams, even small ones, provide continuity when staff or political leadership change.

### 3. Narrative Alignment

Biodiversity remains actionable when it is linked to core institutional priorities such as resilience, public well-being, rural livelihood, regional identity or risk reduction – essentially, priorities that persist across electoral or administrative cycles.

## Practical Moves to Embed Biodiversity

These steps ensure continuity without requiring large-scale reform:

- Add biodiversity as a standard consideration in templates used across units (planning notes, justification memos, funding calls).
- Include biodiversity as a standing agenda point in inter-service coordination meetings.
- Introduce lightweight shared responsibility, e.g., two units co-own a workstream rather than one.
- When pilots or small initiatives work, integrate their tasks into routine roles, not new projects.
- Use multi-year framework agreements rather than single-year grants to sustain local actors.

These are small, system-facing adjustments – the kind that make progress hold.

## Keeping Momentum When Contexts Change

Progress is rarely linear. But preserving small advances, verbally or in writing, matters.

When leadership changes:

**“Maintaining biodiversity strengthens continuity and resilience under changing conditions.”**

When leadership changes:

**“This approach is now built into our standard process. It continues while priorities are reviewed.”**

When budgets tighten:

**“Low-cost biodiversity measures reduce long-term maintenance and vulnerability costs.”**

Continuity does not rely on constant advocacy, but rather on making biodiversity the *path of least resistance* in everyday work.

## Working with Institutional Rhythms and Timing

We found that biodiversity integration is often not blocked by disagreement – but by timing. If biodiversity enters the discussion after priorities, budgets or wording are already fixed, it is difficult to include without appearing disruptive or costly.

This section focuses on where biodiversity can be introduced with the greatest ease and legitimacy – upstream, where meaning is shaped.

### Where Integration can be Most Effective

The most effective moments are the early framing stages, such as:

- Concept notes
- Agenda-setting conversations
- Issue papers / briefing notes
- Inter-service scoping discussions
- Initial budget envelope planning
- Terms of reference for expert groups or consultations

These are points where language is forming, and biodiversity can be included without requiring new procedures.

### Light, Strategic Insertions

Instead of advocating for biodiversity, the shift is made through small, well-timed sentences, which are neutral, planning-aligned questions:

**“Before we specify measures, should we consider whether this affects the ecological conditions that implementation depends on?”**

**“Could biodiversity be included here as part of resilience / continuity / quality of place?”**

**“Does this align with our existing biodiversity commitments, or should we reference them?”**

### Using Momentum

Policy systems move in cycles. The goal is not to introduce biodiversity everywhere all the time, but to use already-moving processes to carry it forward. Integration best succeeds when biodiversity enters lightly, and in the language of shared goals.

Examples of moments where this can work:

- Strategy renewals
- Climate adaptation plans
- Regional development programmes
- Procurement or investment framework updates
- New funding frameworks.

# Looking Forward: Designing Policies that Enable Biodiversity (and People)

Over the past decade, biodiversity has gained visibility in strategies, funding frameworks and international commitments. Yet, we see that policy ambition does not automatically translate into positive outcomes when other policies create incentives that undermine ecological and social resilience.

Across cases and interviews, policymakers emphasised that:

- Conservation policy alone cannot compensate for pressures created elsewhere (e.g., agricultural intensification, infrastructure expansion, market pressures).
- Biodiversity outcomes depend on the everyday decisions of sectors whose core mandates are not explicitly environmental.
- Transformation requires alignment, not parallel policies.

This means that the future of biodiversity policy is not only a question of strengthening biodiversity regulations, but of ensuring that other policy domains do not systematically counteract ecological goals.

## Beyond Silos

Biodiversity is not a single sector. It is a condition that underpins all sectors – food, water, climate adaptation, public health, spatial planning, cultural identity, and economic resilience.

Policies therefore need to be:

- Cross-cutting in design, not only in implementation.
- Co-owned across ministries, not held by one department.
- Based on shared responsibilities, not delegated expertise.

## Aligning Incentives

The most substantial barriers identified by policymakers across PLANET4B were not conceptual but economic and institutional:

- Subsidies and budget lines that reward practices harmful to biodiversity.

- Performance indicators that privilege short-term output over long-term resilience.
- Accountability systems that evaluate individual sectors independently.

To move forward:

Policies must ensure that public funding does not create ecological harm, and that biodiversity-positive practices become the easiest practices to maintain.

## Making Biodiversity a Foundation, Not an Add-On

The implication is that biodiversity policy cannot remain a parallel track.

It needs to function as:

- A guiding principle in agricultural, trade, finance, spatial and social policy.
- A normative anchor for how value is defined.
- A criterion of legitimacy in public decision-making.

This means future policies should prioritise:

| Priority                                             | What this means in practice                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Breaking perverse incentives                         | Review subsidy, trade, and procurement rules that unintentionally encourage biodiversity loss.           |
| Integrating biodiversity into sectoral policy logics | Not “adding nature on top”, but shaping what resilience, productivity, fairness and public benefit mean. |
| Supporting long-term transitions and transformation  | Multi-year, stable funding for practices that sustain ecological and social well-being.                  |
| Strengthening public participation and co-governance | Valuing lived experience and local care as essential to ensuring legitimacy and sustained engagement     |

## The Direction of Travel

The future of biodiversity governance is not about more technical precision or stricter compliance alone. It is about aligning the values, incentives and practices that shape land, food, materials, places and public life.

Biodiversity can only thrive when the systems that shape it – economic, cultural, political –

are oriented toward sustaining life rather than eroding it.

This requires collaboration across sectors, shared ownership of outcomes, and policies that make biodiversity the more realistic, resilient and rewarding choice.

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## Closing Reflection

The work of integrating biodiversity into policy is gradual, relational and continuous. It evolves through conversations, shared practice, and the patient adjustment of routines and responsibilities. It does not depend on perfect consensus or rapid transformation, but on steady alignment and sustained attention to how decisions shape the conditions of life over time.

As more institutions recognise biodiversity as part of what makes economies, places and communities resilient, the space for meaningful action will continue to expand. Change rarely happens all at once, but it does happen – through small steps that become

normal, and through relationships that become commitments.

**Your work in this process is both paramount and crucial.** The judgment, sensitivity and forward-looking decisions made by policymakers shape the environments in which people live, grow and belong.

**The path forward is not only possible – it is already underway.** Each step that makes biodiversity easier to consider, easier to support, and easier to sustain contributes to a future in which policy not only protects nature but helps societies live well within it.

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## For Further Inspiration

You are warmly invited to continue exploring, learning, and contributing:

### **PLANET4B Policy Briefs**

#### **The PLANET4B Catalogue of Methods**

Practical, co-created tools for building belonging, agency and shared care.

#### **PLANET4B Care-full Courses with behaviour insights or for engaging communities**

Flexible, open-access courses offering creative, tested methods to support inclusive biodiversity action across policy processes.

#### **PLANET4B Care-full Resources**

A searchable directory of engagement methods and transformative change stories – real examples of communities and movements reshaping their relationships with biodiversity.

**Sister projects and networks** working on transformation, care, values, and biodiversity:

[BioAgora](#) | [BioNext](#) | [BIOTRAILS](#) | [BioTraCes](#) | [COEVOLVERS](#) | [DAISY](#) | [GoDigiBios](#) | [NATURESCAPES](#) | [PRO-COAST](#) | [TRANS-Lighthouses](#) | [TRANSPATH](#)

## Partners

Partnership based on diversity and strong collaboration.



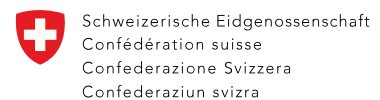
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