

UK International Nature Finance Tracker ●

Bringing greater transparency to UK international nature finance spending

Analysis by Campaign for Nature¹ and
Conservation International UK², January 2026

Key observations

01

The UK government's programme-level reporting of UK International Climate Finance (ICF) flows is currently poor, and consistent public reporting of nature and forests flows on a project basis is non-existent.

02

The UK government has not published consolidated project-level information on its international climate finance flows on an annual basis since 2020.

03

Since the introduction of a specific nature finance commitment in 2021 there has been no recurring public reporting of either total or programme-level nature spend.

04

To promote effective public and civil society engagement regarding the UK's international climate finance spending, the UK government should mandate the FCDO to publish an itemised list of all UK ICF spend.

Background: UK International Climate Finance

International Climate Finance (ICF) is the part of the UK government's aid budget (known as Official Development Assistance or ODA) that supports developing countries to respond to climate change.

The UK first began providing ICF in 2011/12 as part of the collective commitment by developed nations to provide \$100 billion annually in climate finance by 2020. This was agreed under the UN COP process, and increased in 2023 to \$300bn p/a by 2035³, to help developing countries respond to climate change.

Historically, the UK has made its climate finance pledges in five-year commitment cycles. In 2019⁴ the UK publicly committed to provide £11.6bn in ICF between 2021 and –26 in the third of these International Climate Finance budget cycles (called 'ICF3').





Nature and Forests within ICF3

In advance of COP26 in Glasgow, in 2021 the UK adopted two further commitments within ICF, allocating £3 billion of the £11.6 billion ICF3 budget to protect and restore nature, of which £1.5 billion was committed to forests⁵.

These nature and forests pledges represented a step-change in the ambition and nature focus of UK climate finance, with the potential to achieve transformative, landscape-level outcomes for nature conservation if effectively utilised.

Lack of transparency and public reporting

Despite being one of the most popular categories of UK aid spending with the British public⁶, UK aid for nature and forests has suffered from a lack of clear reporting on how the money has been spent.

In the four years since the inception of the ICF3 nature and forests pledges, there has been no specific and recurring public disclosure of either overall progress against the targets or related programme spend.

This lack of transparency around levels of spend, programming priorities, and programme performance has inhibited efforts to understand and improve UK aid for nature, and to ensure it is oriented towards the most effective forms of grant financing for nature protection and restoration.



Purpose of this brief

For the first time, using figures obtained through Freedom of Information (Fol) requests covering the first four years (2021–2025) of the ICF3 period, this brief sets out the current status of UK ICF for nature.⁷

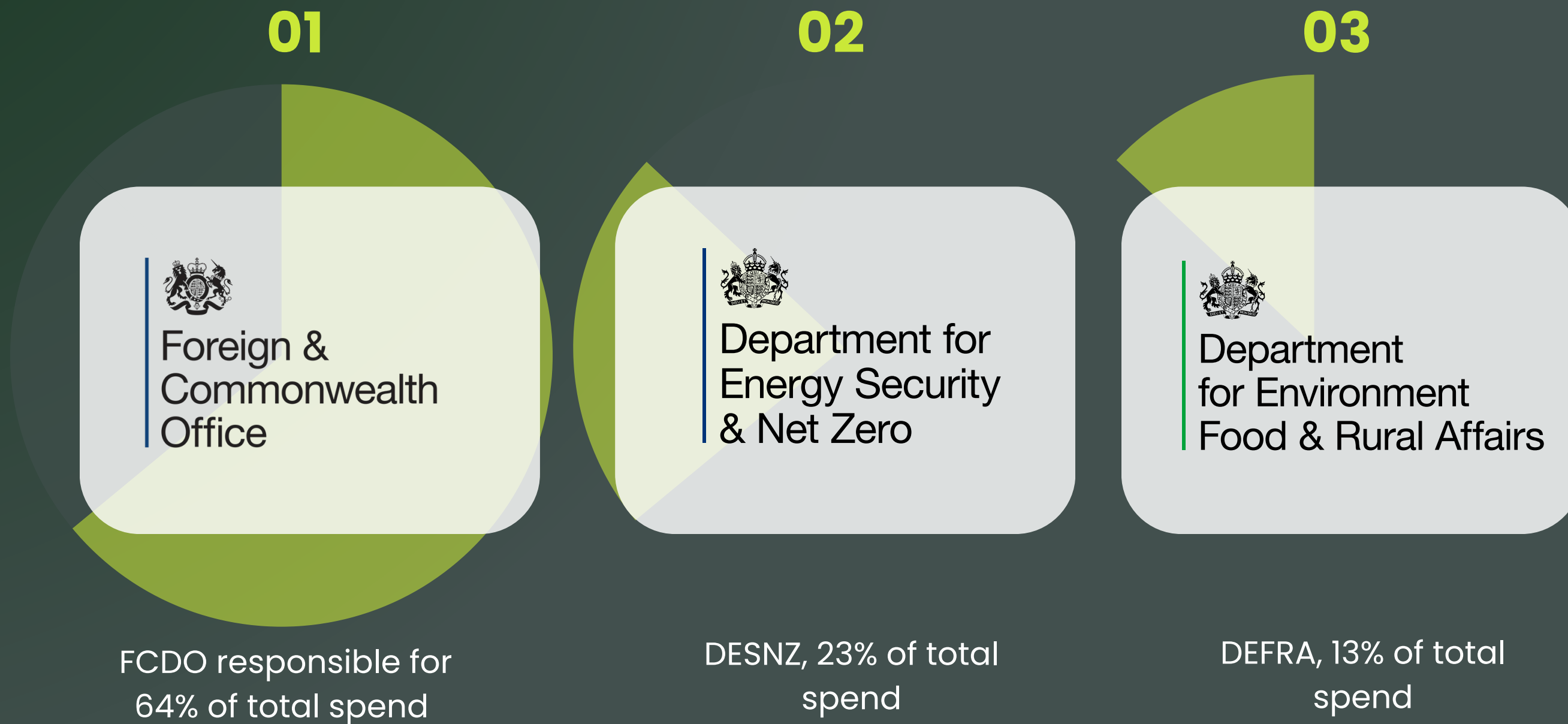
The purpose of this brief is to support a renewed focus on nature and nature-based climate solutions within UK climate finance, enabling external stakeholders to understand where and how UK climate finance for nature and forests is currently being spent, and providing a template for future public reporting by the UK government.



International Climate Finance (ICF) for nature spend by department

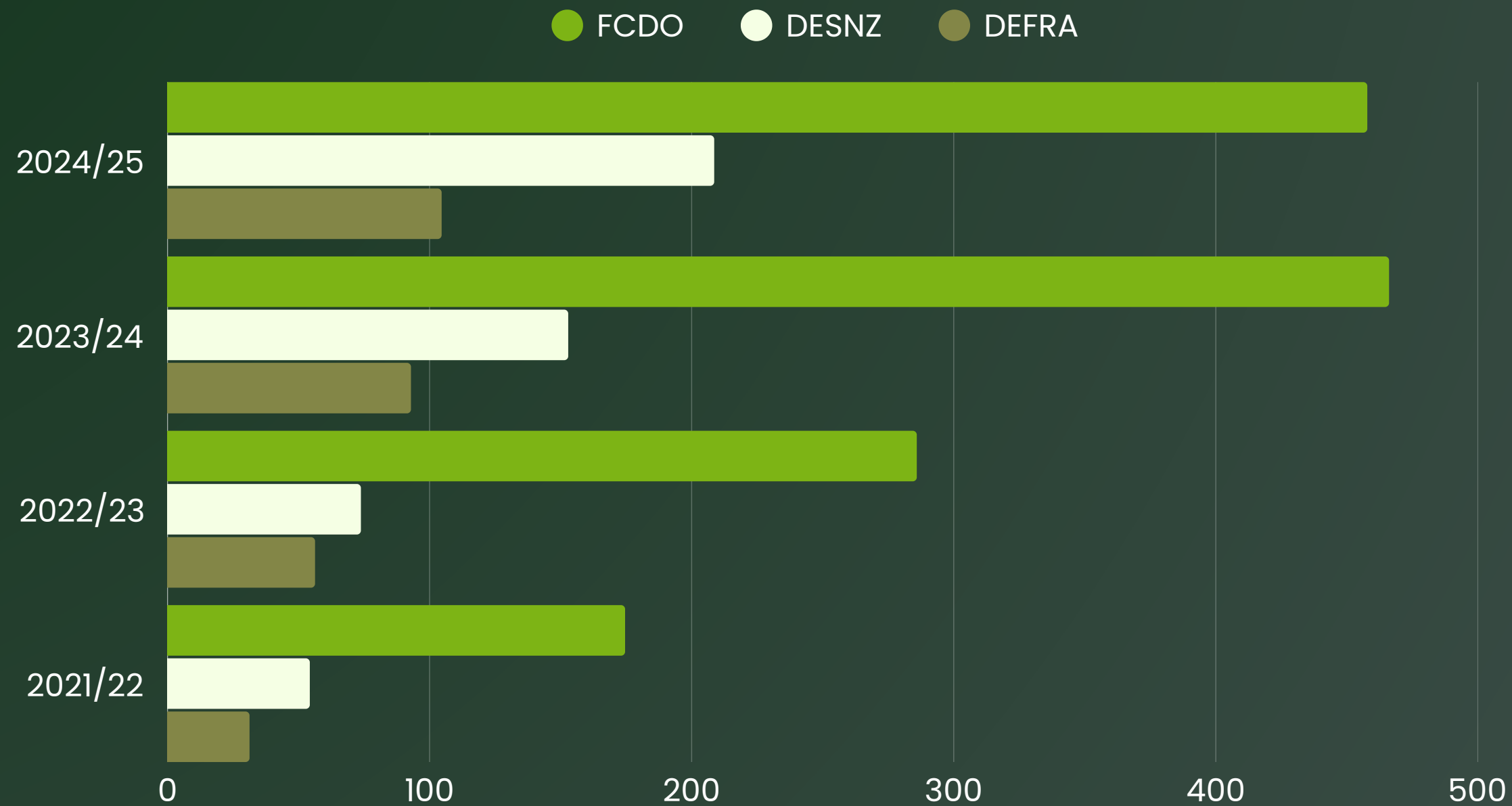
ICF for nature spend by department

UK ICF is currently delivered through three ODA-spending departments:



ICF for nature spend by department

ICF3 nature spend by department (annual) (£m)

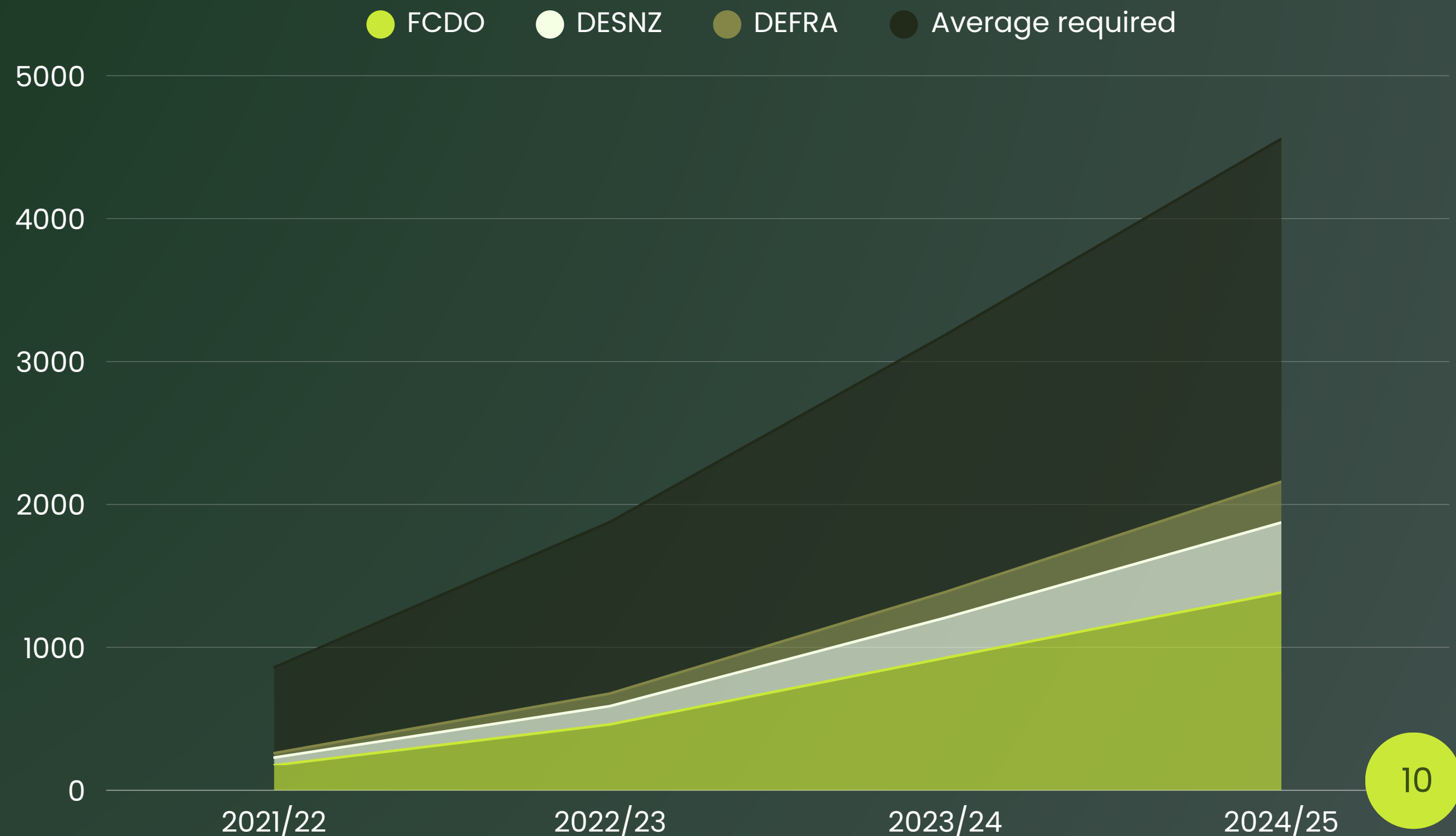


ICF for nature spend by department

ICF3 nature spend by department (cumulative) (£m)

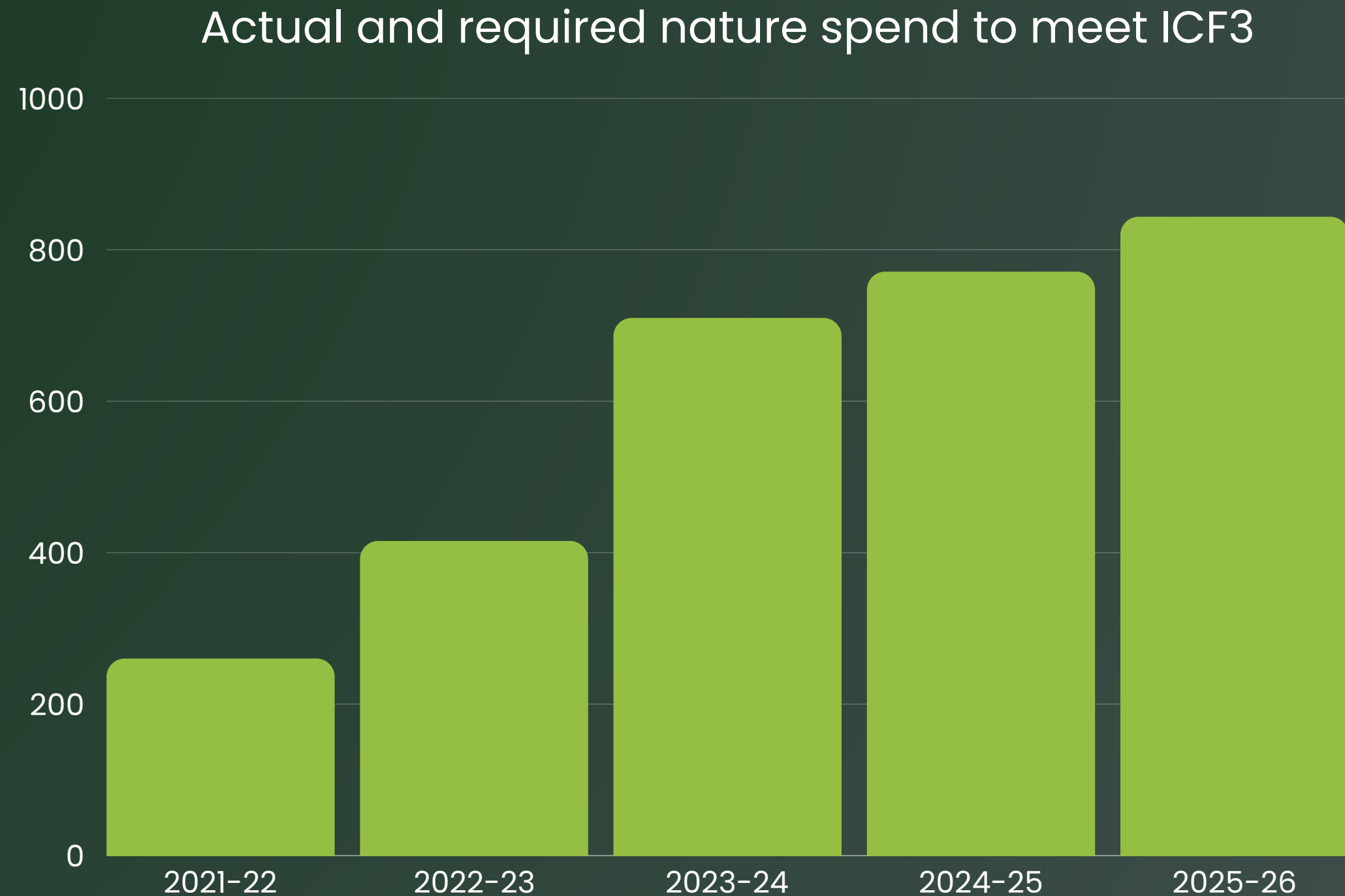
This graph shows total cumulative reported ICF nature spend by department for the first four years of ICF3, alongside the average rate of spend (£600m per year) required to meet the £3bn target by 2025/26.

As with overall ICF spend, the first two years of the ICF3 period saw total rates of recorded ICF nature spend fall substantially below the annual average spend required to meet the pledge.



ICF for nature spend by department

This graph provides total recorded spend by year, showing that while aggregate recorded spend then rose significantly in 2023/24 and 2024/25, total spend in 2025/26 will still need to be at least £843.5m in order to meet the UK's £3bn commitment.



ICF for nature spend by programme

The FCDO accounts for the large majority of individual programmes reporting nature ICF, with a total of 96 programmes reporting some nature ICF spend in at least one year of ICF3 (to date). DESNZ recorded nature ICF spend through a total of 12 programmes, with DEFRA recording spend through 19.

This table shows recorded ICF nature spend by department and programme, identifying all programmes with cumulative expenditure over £20m in the first four years of ICF3 (with the remaining projects aggregated).

Department	Programme	2021–25 (£m)	%
FCDO	GCF	405.5	18.8
FCDO	GEF	274.2	12.7
FCDO / DESNZ	IFSLU	66.6	3.1
FCDO	FGMC	63.1	2.9
FCDO	CGIAR	48.9	2.3
FCDO	PHENOMENAL	47.3	2.2
FCDO	UK PACT	44.1	2
FCDO	ARCAN/CAFI	43.9	2
FCDO	EC2R	39.1	1.8
FCDO	ASEAN ACGF	30.8	1.4
FCDO	CARA	27.5	1.3
FCDO	CLARE	21.2	1
FCDO	All other FCDO (79)	275.5	12.8
DESNZ	SCALE / ENABLE	153.9	7.1
DESNZ	MFF	93.6	4.3
DESNZ	Amazon Fund	82.5	3.8
DESNZ	CIF NPC	65	3
DESNZ	AIM4Forests	31.5	1.5
DESNZ	REDD EM	30	1.4
DESNZ	All other DESNZ (4)	29.8	1.4
DEFRA	DARWIN	55.2	2.6
DEFRA	GFCR	36.3	1.7
DEFRA	OCPP	35.9	1.7
DEFRA	ICF R&D	33.6	1.6
DEFRA	PROBLUE	30.4	1.4
DEFRA	All other DEFRA (13)	93.7	4.3

ICF for nature spend by programme

This table shows total ICF nature spend by major programme in ICF3⁸, highlighting the predominant role of multilateral and multi-bilateral programming within the UK's current nature ICF spend:

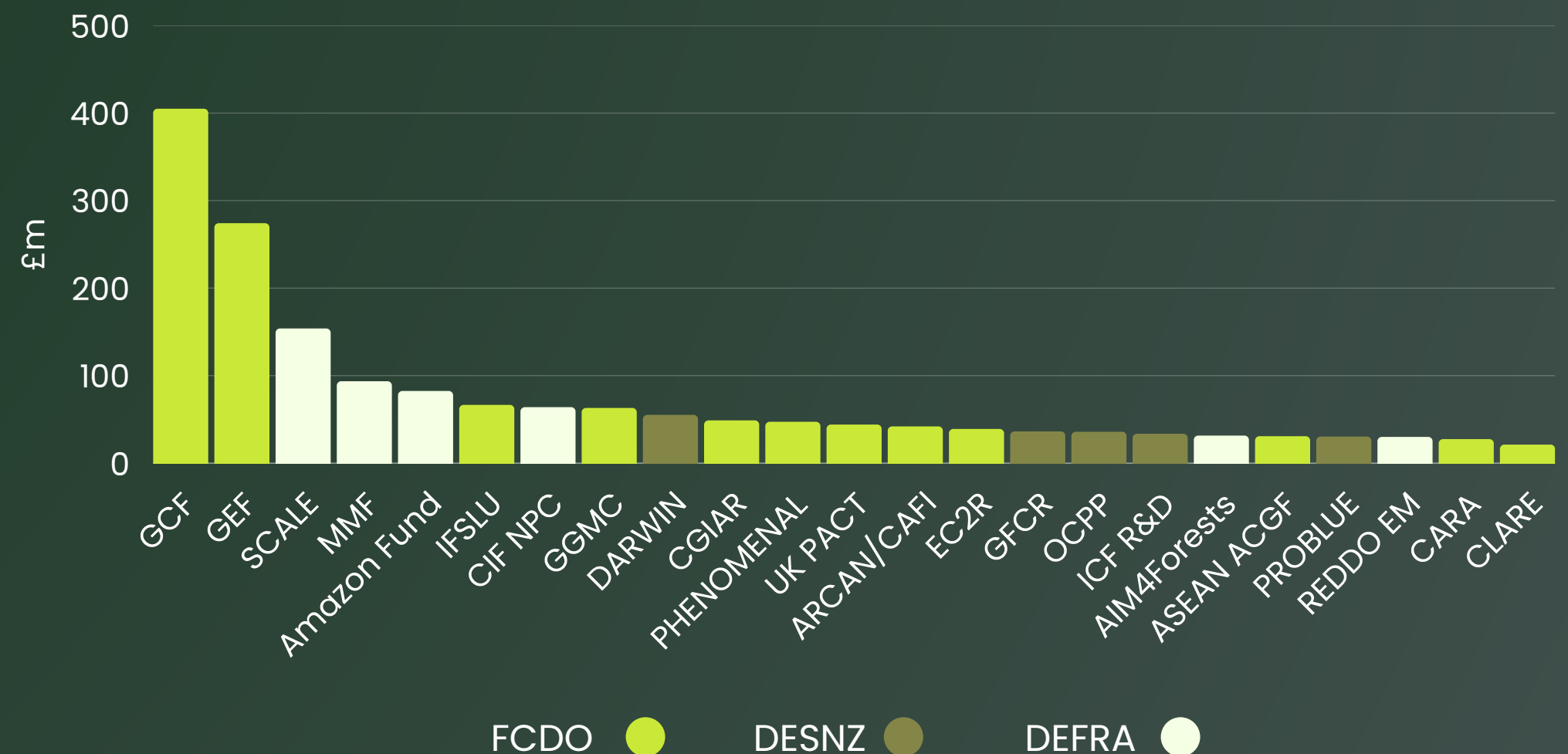
Examples of multilateral programming:

- Green Climate Fund (GCF)
- Global Environment Fund (GEF)

Examples of multi-bilateral programming:

- Scaling Climate Action by Lowering Emissions (SCALE)
- Mobilising Finance for Forests (MFF)
- Amazon Fund
- Climate Investment Fund (CIF)
- Nature, People and Climate (NPC)

ICF nature spend by largest programme by department
(£m) (>£20m total)



Big success, small money

01

The Darwin Initiative, the UK's flagship bilateral biodiversity protection programme, accounted for just 2.6% (£55.2m) of ICF for nature over the period.



02

The Biodiverse Landscapes Fund (BLF), a £100m initiative to support nature in six priority landscapes, and the most prominent bilateral nature-related ODA programme created in the past decade, does not feature in the chart due to having total programme ICF expenditure over the term of less than £20m (£19.5m), and has since been significantly scaled back following recent ODA budget cuts.

Current status of UK ICF reporting (Q1 2026)

Specific programme-level reporting of UK ICF flows is currently poor, and consistent public reporting of nature and forests flows on a project basis is non-existent.

The UK now only reports its international climate finance flows on an itemised basis through the biannual UN Framework Convention on Climate Change reporting framework (undertaken with a two-year lag), meaning that the UK government does not currently intend to release official figures for UK ICF spend in 2023 and 2024 until late 2026, representing a substantial regression from prior established reporting practice.

Following the UK's exit from the EU, the UK has ceased to publish consolidated project-level information on its international climate finance flows on an annual basis, with the last EU-mandated reporting taking place in 2020 (for 2019 spend).

Since the introduction of a specific nature finance commitment within UK ICF (from FY 2021/22 onwards), there has been no recurring public reporting of either total or programme-level nature spend.



Ensuring ICF transparency: recommendations

Recommendations

01

Publish an itemised list of all UK ICF spend, including spend under the nature and forests commitments, by calendar and financial year, within six months of the respective year-end.¹⁰

02

Include a column for ICF status within the project-level disclosure reported annually through the UK aid statistics reporting process. This data should include four categories; ICF (non-nature), ICF nature (non-forest), ICF nature (forest), and none.

03

Publish an itemised list of all the projects contributing to total current reported ICF results by year and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) value on an annual basis as part of the ICF results reporting process.

Methodology

The figures provided in this document were obtained through separate Freedom of Information (FoI) requests to FCDO, DESNZ and DEFRA, with responses received between September and November 2025. These were then sorted and merged where relevant (for example in the case of multiple replenishments to the same organisation, where programmes have involved more than one phase, or where programmes were financed by more than one department.¹¹



A lush tropical forest with a river in the foreground and misty mountains in the background. The scene is filled with dense green foliage, including tall trees and hanging vines. The river reflects the surrounding forest. In the distance, a mountain peak is visible through a layer of mist or low clouds under a grey, overcast sky.

Thank you

www.naturefinancetracker.com

Appendix

1. <https://www.campaignfornature.org/>
2. <https://www.conservation.org/>
3. Extended under the 2015 Paris Agreement to 2025, then increased to \$300bn annually at the COP29 in Baku.
4. At the 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit (UNCAS)
5. The full commitment is to provide £3bn in ICF3 to support “climate change solutions that protect, restore, and sustainably manage nature.” UK ODA classified as ICF represents the majority – but not all – of UK aid for nature and the environment more broadly, as important forms of UK aid for environmental issues (for example in relation to plastics, pollution and fisheries) are not classifiable as climate finance (either in whole or in part). The nature and forests finance ICF subcommitments have not, to date, been affected by the post-ICF3 commitment changes to the basic ICF accounting methodology first introduced in 2023, and therefore continue to reflect the original pledge methodology, however changes to the departmental recording of ICF appear to have increased the percentage of nature-related ODA which is recorded as ICF (and therefore eligible against the ICF nature target), especially in programmes managed by DEFRA – for example the ICF coefficient for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds (including the Darwin Initiative and the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund) has increased significantly in recent years.
6. See ‘Government Spending’, United Kingdom, Vote Intention, at <https://moneytalksresearch.org/dashboard-mt-tax-24>
7. For responses on forests spend within nature spend are currently pending (Q1, 2026), but figures previously obtained for the first three years of ICF3 show spend following the same broad trajectory.
8. Including all programmes with a cumulative expenditure of £20m or more over the first four years of ICF3 (2021–2025).
9. The principal source of comprehensive project-by-project information on UK ICF spend by calendar year (the period corresponding to the UK’s annual ODA spending target) was previously the EU’s climate action reporting process, which the UK participated in while an EU member. This included annual itemised reporting by calendar year on international public climate finance flows with a nine month lag (for example 2019 figures were reported in 2020).
10. This data should be provided in an accessible spreadsheet format (ie. csv/xls). This should include separate columns denoting financial instrument (grant, concessional loan, non-concessional loan, equity, other), finance channel (multilateral, bi through multi and other bilateral), type of support (mitigation, adaptation and cross-cutting), spending ringfence designation (nature (forest), nature (other) and none) and related coefficients where relevant, and nature and forest spend values. Publication of programme-level ICF spend by both calendar and financial year is particularly important because of the differing methods for setting and measuring performance against the UK’s overall ODA and ICF spending targets, with ODA spending targeted and reported annually on a calendar year basis and ICF spend also currently only reported on a calendar year basis (and bi-annually), but ICF spend targeted on a financial year basis
11. In two cases programmes were assigned to the lead funder for the purposes of programme ranking – DESNZ project ‘Territorios Forestales Sostenibles (TEFOS)’ (0039-ForTREES) was integrated with FCDO project ‘Colombia: Forests, Communities & Sustainable Growth (Territorios Forestales Sostenibles)’ (301502), and DESNZ project ‘Partnerships for Forests (P4F)’ (0018-P4F) was integrated with FCDO project ‘Investments in Forests and Sustainable Land Use (IFSLU)’ (202745 / 301321) – and in one case two DEFRA programme lines reported separately under one programme code were merged (the ‘Nature Transition Support Programme (NTSP)’ (P0011-RD) was integrated into ‘ICF R&D (GCBC & NTSP)’ (P0011-RD)