



Landsec

## Press release

**Title** A third of UK city dwellers plan to leave in the next decade, with access to more nature and green space the top factor

**From** Landsec

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- *New polling by Landsec reveals over half of people living and working in UK cities plan to leave their cities in the future, a third in the next ten years, citing access to nature and green space; access to fresher air, and to be closer to friends and family as the top factors*
  - *Data shows city dwellers believe protecting nature and biodiversity should be the second-biggest priority for developers behind good transport links*
  - *Research demonstrates nature needs to be at the forefront for cities to remain desirable places for people to live and work, as well as continue to be engines for UK growth*
  - *Results come as Landsec launches its new nature strategy with targets to improve nature and biodiversity in the built environment, promote community engagement, and provide cities with nature-led solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change*

New research conducted by Landsec suggests improving nature and biodiversity needs to be at the heart of UK city planning if they are to remain desirable places for people to live and work.

Landsec's research reveals over half (55%) of people living and working in UK cities plan to leave in the future, a third (33%) in the next ten years, with more access to nature and green space cited as the top reason.

The polling of over 1,200 people across some of the UK's major cities, including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow, and Cardiff, revealed other top reasons for wanting to leave cities including: access to more nature and green space (34%), access to fresher air (33%) and to be closer to family and friends (24%).

Expectations people have of what cities should provide for them has risen since the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw cities hit by lockdowns and economic downturns that have caused many to rethink their quality of life. Over half (53%) of respondents now expect more to be done on issues including air quality, affordable housing, and greater access to nature near their homes.

The research iterates the importance of putting nature at the heart of urban developments, to ensure cities remain desirable places for people to live and work, and can remain engines of the UK economy. It outlines the high value people living and working cities put on nature, with a resounding 94% placing at least some importance on nature access. Almost four in ten respondents (39%) named inclusion of green space and more trees, plants and wildlife as the biggest priority for developers in new building developments – only behind transport links (41%).

There is a growing risk that if cities do not match the importance people place on nature, many will begin to look elsewhere. With over four-fifths (84%) believing their city should be doing more to prepare for



climate change, and nine in ten (87%) recognising the importance of new developments in their city prioritising nature, there is clear work to be done to align with people's priorities.

It comes as Landsec launches a new nature strategy that aims to deliver a range of nature-led benefits across its urban spaces, led by three core principles which will apply across its current and future assets:

- **Improving biodiversity** – New habitats for wildlife are being created to ensure nature and biodiversity flourishes across Landsec assets. Improving biodiversity across Landsec assets and developments will be measured by Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), which quantifies the extent to which habitats have been created or enhanced.
- **Promoting health, wellbeing, and community engagement** – Creating and maintaining high-quality green spaces that encourage social interactions immersed in nature. Landsec will use the Environmental Benefits from Nature tool, created by Natural England and the University of Oxford, to evaluate the health, wellbeing, and community benefits it has created through improving nature across its developments.
- **Creating nature-based solutions** - Incorporating nature-based solutions into the urban spaces it develops and operates to help meet net zero ambitions and build resilience to a changing climate. Landsec will use the Urban Greening Factor measurement to analyse the quality of green space on providing ecosystem services such as permeability, cooling, and air purification.

The strategy's three core principles align with what people living and working in cities understand about the positive impact nature can provide to society and their quality of life, such as benefits to physical health (85% agree) and mental health (87%), as well as mitigating the impacts of climate change (80%).

**Landsec Head of Sustainability, Jennie Colville says:**

*"Nature is not a luxury but a necessity for equitable, resilient and thriving cities. It plays a vital role in keeping our cities habitable, from the food that we eat, to the air that we breathe, and can be one of the best lines of defence against climate change. The quality and amount of nature in urban places has been neglected in recent years because of population growth, industrialisation and the development needed to meet modern society's needs.*

*"To build the cities we need for the future, we must change our approach to urbanisation in a way that enables people and nature to co-exist, while creating jobs and fuelling economic growth. If cities don't embrace this change, they risk losing out on valuable talent, growth, and vitality, while remaining vulnerable to the intensifying impacts of climate change. Through our nature strategy, we're taking a holistic approach to the way we design, develop, and manage our places to find the right solutions, ones that benefit the environment and communities, and reflect the full value of nature."*

The new strategy will go beyond current government guidelines, which requires developers to provide 10% BNG on all habitats within the redline boundary of their development, whether or not they are impacted. For existing assets, Landsec has committed an additional 10% increase to its existing BNG targets, while for future developments Landsec will aim to make a 20% BNG on sites with existing 'greening' and ensure the development of 2 biodiversity units per hectare (2 unit/ha) for sites with 'no greening'.



To embed nature within its operational and standing assets, Landsec has created 15 Core Nature Requirements (CNRs) that will underpin the development process, including guidance on which types of green interventions (GI) are required to satisfy each requirement. Guidance has been incorporated into Landsec's Sustainable Development Toolkits, a comprehensive guide used by its development teams and external partners to ensure sustainability is considered throughout the design and construction of its projects.

Landsec has also created Nature Action Plans (NAPs) for every operational asset under its control across the company. The NAPs were developed following a portfolio-wide ecological assessment, and lists opportunities for improvement on each site to deliver against the three core principles and metrics. A Nature Handbook has also been developed by Landsec to guide site teams and landscapers on design and implementation factors such as appropriate species and positioning.

The strategy builds on Landsec's existing work to improve nature and restore biodiversity through its developments. For example, at its flagship London building, [The Forge](#), over 25 wildflower species have been planted on its 'green roof', alongside wetland pools, sandy piles, and cobbled areas to provide a variety of habitats for invertebrates. In Mayfield, Manchester, Landsec has redeveloped brownfield land to create an urban park – the first in the centre of Manchester in 100 years. By allowing the River Medlock to regain its natural path, which has been enhanced with diverse planting and landscaping, the Environmental Agency has recorded fish species in that part of the River Medlock for the first time in May 2023.

Landsec will report on progress for operational assets every two years, while for future developments, progress will be updated on a project-by-project basis via ecological surveys to allow initiatives time to establish.

For more information about Landsec's new nature strategy, visit <https://landsec.com/>.

## **Ends**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

For interviews, imagery or other media-related inquiries, please contact [landsecns@portland-communications.com](mailto:landsecns@portland-communications.com).

### **About Landsec**

At Landsec, we build and invest in buildings, spaces and partnerships to create sustainable places, connect communities and realise potential. We are one of the largest real estate companies in Europe, with a portfolio of retail, leisure, workspace and residential hubs. Landsec is shaping a better future by leading our industry on environmental and social sustainability while delivering value for our shareholders, great experiences for our guests and positive change for our communities.



### **Further information about polling**

Portland Communications conducted an online survey with 1,222 members of the UK public, aged 18+, in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow and Cardiff. The data is representative of the UK population on age, gender, region, social grade and ethnicity.

Portland Communications is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

### **Further polling insights**

- Whilst there is an overwhelming satisfaction with the cities they are currently living in, over half (55%) said they do plan to leave at some point in the future. A third (33%) plan to leave within 10 years, and almost a fifth (19%) within 5 years.
  - London residents expressed a much greater likelihood to leave than other cities. Over a quarter (27%) of Londoners said they planned to leave within 5 years, and 14% said they planned to leave within 2 years.
- Why are city residents considering upping and leaving? Principally: to get closer to nature and green space (34%) and access fresher air (33%).
  - On this question, there is a distinct age divergence, with younger people particularly likely to suggest they might leave for work opportunities, whereas older dwellers are more likely to leave for cleaner/fresher air.
- Attitudes have been irrevocably changed since the Covid pandemic, with almost two thirds (64%) claiming their expectations of a city have changed since.
  - Among those who said their expectations had changed, 84% said they wanted more from a city.
  - And what do people want more of post-pandemic? Cleaner and fresher air quality (41%), more affordable housing (39%), and greater access to nature near their home (37%), round off the top 3 demands.
- Nearly nine in ten (87%) people living and working in UK cities recognise the importance of prioritising nature for new developments.
- Given the opportunity to consider what they would like developers to prioritise in new building developments, respondents said transport links (41%) were of chief importance. However, only narrowly behind, was the inclusion of green space (39%) and inclusion of more trees, plants and wildlife (39%).
- 84% agreed with the statement that developers need to do more to incorporate nature into their projects.
- Nearly four in ten (38%) mentioned that too much development was seen as one of the biggest threats to nature and green spaces in their city, only second to litter and waste (44%).
- Over half (55%) of respondents place a lot of value on having access to nature or green space in their city. A further 38% place a bit, meaning 94% of city dwellers place at least some importance on nature access.
- Respondents are fundamentally positive that nature can provide a range of benefits to society, including physical health benefits (85% agree); mental health benefits (87%); and mitigating the impacts of climate change (80%).
- Over four fifths (84%) of city dwellers believe cities should be doing more to prepare for the effects of climate change, with 44% saying their city should be doing *much* more.