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Centuries of industrialisation desolated swathes of Britain, but toxicity can be cleaned up and nature has a remarkable ability to recover from abuse. The familiar pattern is exploitation, then gradual community realisation of the harm, then governments slowly catching up by rectifying legislation, and then recovery – if we are lucky.

That cycle still exists, with industrial-scale development, farming and fishing driven by decades of Government policy focused on productivity and short-term profit at the expense of sustainability, leaving the natural environment in tatters. Everywhere, species are struggling to adapt to the pace of change and the cumbersome mechanics of Government is consistently too slow at legislating for reasonable care. It makes for a grim picture indeed, but is all lost and can ordinary people make a difference?

An emerging alternative with better prospects is where individuals align with groups and those groups use that support to act decisively and quickly. The RSPB has more than one million members acting together as a voice for nature. Not far behind in membership, the 47 Wildlife Trusts across Britain have more than 800,000 supporters and the Woodland Trust has 300,000. Additionally, nearly four million people support the National Trust, with 750,000 backing English Heritage.

Common to these organisations is the strategy of acquiring land that is then managed more sustainably. This philosophy provides an accumulation of wildlife havens, just waiting for the opportunity to spread out once the political climate favours expansion.

These fragmented islands are the seeds for future environmental recovery, and linking them with hedges, street trees, gardens, wider field margins and greener highways will help. Eventually, the politicians will stumble into the frame, but if you want to make a difference now then supporting the above organisations is probably the best bet.

