ODA Programme Annual Review

Title: Global Biodiversity Framework Fund		
Programme Value £ (full life): £55m		**Review date: June 2026**
Programme Code: GB-GOV-7-GBF Fund Investment	**Start date:** March 2024	**End date:** March 2030

Summary of Programme Performance

Year	**2024/25**	**2025/26**
Overall Output Score	**B**	**B**
Risk Rating	**Medium**	**Medium**

DevTracker Link to Business Case:	**Business Case**
DevTracker Link to results framework:	**Logical Framework**

A. SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

A1. Description of programme

The Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBF Fund) was launched in 2024 to support delivery of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It provides grant funding to up to 143 ODA-eligible countries for projects that aim to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. The GBF Fund is administered by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) - the principal multilateral climate and environment fund supporting developing countries in tackling major environmental problems - and focuses finance to countries with high levels of biodiversity and those with the greatest need or least capacity.

The GBF Fund is governed by the GBF Fund Council, with the UK (FCDO) occupying one of the 32 Council Member seats. Defra undertake all the programme and financial management and has provided the UK's £55m financial contribution, which makes the UK the third largest contributor.

This Annual Review was conducted by the GBF Fund Programme Team using project-level data from the GEF Project Portal and publicly available GBF Fund Council papers. The assessment primarily uses expected results reported at project approval, rather than realised results from implementation. This limits the strength of conclusions on effectiveness, impact and value for money; actual results will become available through future project mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations, and consolidated portfolio reporting.

A2. Summary supporting narrative for the overall score in this review

Overall performance is rated B. The GBF Fund has established credible institutional governance, fully approved $137 million of projects and provisionally allocated 94% of all available resource. However, there is limited implementation evidence to date and expected delivery remains uneven: although both outcome milestone targets have been met, several output indicators are below target, and most expected results are not yet evidenced through implementation. Continuation is justified by the strong project pipeline and the GBF Fund's wider strategic role, subject to closer monitoring of approval, disbursement, co-financing and portfolio-level targets.

The GEF Secretariat has successfully used the GBF Fund as a test bed to pilot new GEF administrative processes to minimise delays in programming and project approval. Some of these pilots have been approved and adopted into the main GEF Trust Fund through the recent GEF9 replenishment process.

To date, a total funding pot of $386m has been made available under the GBF Fund for project financing. This second annual review considers the success of the GBF Fund to date and includes a summary of the 19 projects that received final approval and endorsement between June 2025 and May 2026, and which represent $70.5m of GEF investment.

Overall, performance in the second year is mixed.

- Governance and project processes are strong, and significant progress has been made. The GBF Fund achieved milestones through to the approval of a new Results Framework, launch of GEF Guidelines on Actions by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, expansion of the Advisory Group of Non-Sovereign Participants, engagement of the Auxiliary Body, and establishment of a GBF Fund Ad Hoc Working Group on Predictability of Financing to help develop the GBF Fund Resource Mobilization Strategy.
- On outputs, portfolio level targets have been met but the GBF Fund is not delivering the range of environmental outputs equivalent to the main GEF Trust Fund. However, the GBF Fund is anticipated to deliver more environmental outputs based on the pipeline of projects that are awaiting final approval.

A3. Major lessons and recommendations for the year ahead

Recommendation	Owner	Timescale
UK team to revise and approve the ODA Programme Logframe to align with the new GBF Fund Results Framework as it becomes operational, including updated indicator definitions and baselines, and track the conversion from provisional approval through to implementation. The revised logframe should be used for the 2027 Annual Review.	Defra	May 2027
The UK should use the Council's UK seat to support the GEF Secretariat in achieving the portfolio level targets, including through resource mobilisation efforts.	Defra, FCDO, GEF	May 2027
UK should work with the GEF Secretariat to establish timetable for receiving portfolio-level actual results, including the first available mid-term review data, and then define how material differences between expected and realised results will affect scoring, risk and value-for-money judgements.	Defra	May 2027

B: THEORY OF CHANGE AND PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

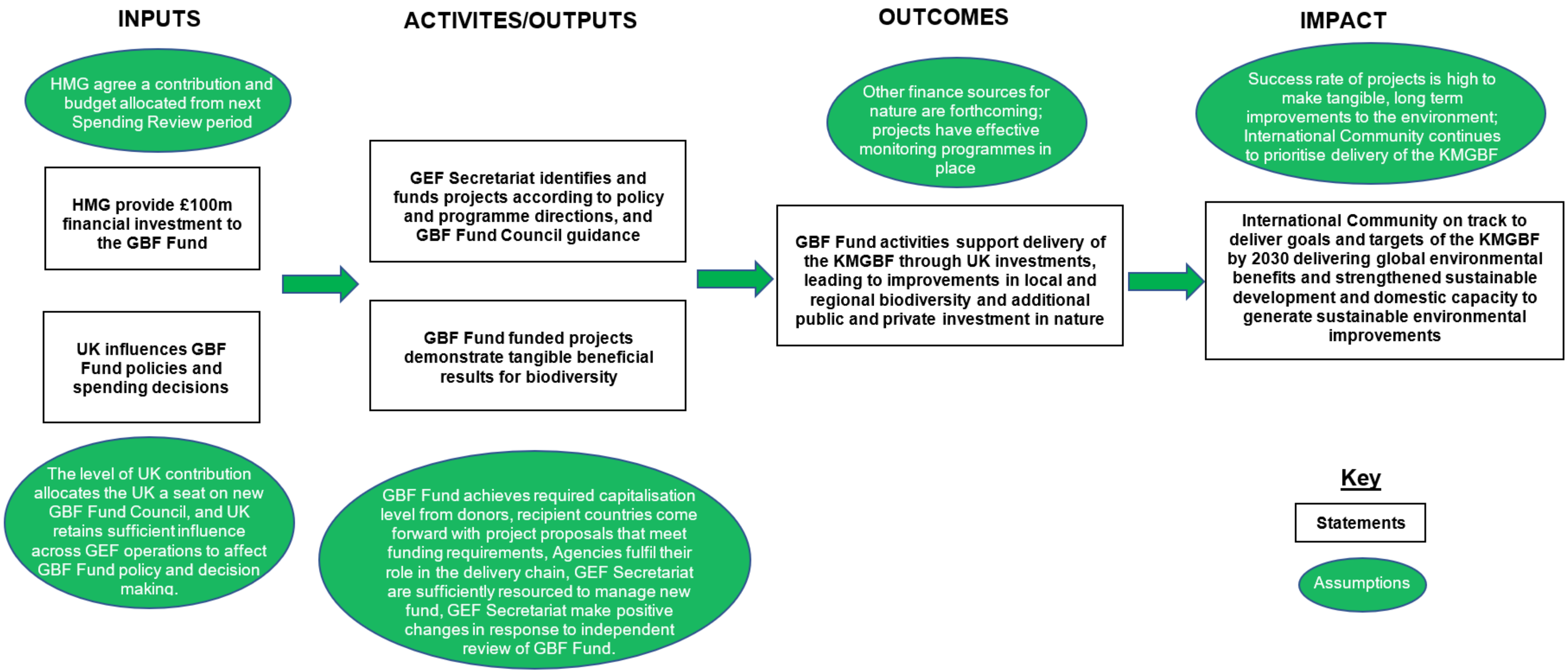
B1. Summarise the programme's theory of change, including any changes to outcome and impact indicators from the original business case.

The elements of the Theory of Change for the UK's GBF Fund investments have not changed since the business case was approved in 2024 and the assumptions in the Theory of Change still stand. For instance, additional sources of nature funding, through public and private sector investments, are forthcoming at a project level through project co-financing. The figure below presents the key elements of the Theory of Change framework. The indicators for measuring the outputs and outcomes statements below are set out in the programme logframe. It is still too early in the project cycle to determine actual the project success rate and effectively assess the impact of the programme; therefore an 80% success rate is still assumed for all projects.

Projects outline their expected outputs against pre-defined core indicators during the planning stage, which are then published by the GEF Secretariat. It is these *expected* results which are used as the basis for this annual review. *Actual* results that are realised will be reported by projects at the project mid-term and terminal evaluation stages, in due course. GEF will aggregate these results for GBF Fund Council review, which will provide meaningful comparison with the original *expected* results.

This second Annual Review assesses the UK's £55 million contribution using cumulative expected results from projects that had received final approval by May 2026. Because the UK contribution cannot be traced to individual projects within the pooled fund, UK-attributable results are estimated using the methodology described in section C2.

The GBF Fund is competitive, and country led, meaning that success is reliant on the expected outputs of the projects proposed by countries. Although desirable, it is likely that not all the predicted results from across all the output indicators will be reached, given the wide range of targets in the GBF and the large number of possible outputs covered. This is taken into account in the programme scoring.



GBF Fund Investment Theory of Change

Project Summary updated

The following table summarises the 19 approved project proposals that received final approval between June 2025 and May 2026, representing $70.5 million of GEF investment. There is strong geographic spread with projects distributed across 18 countries from Central and Latin America, Africa, and Asia/Pacific. There is also a high proportion of SIDS/LDCs represented, with two-thirds of projects in the cohort supporting countries with the greatest need.

Project	Country	SIDS/LDC	Total GEF Cost
Strengthening the protected area system in Angola through innovation and capacity development	Angola	Yes	$3,260,000
Support for the development of a national policy, institutional and monitoring framework to effectively implement the Nagoya Protocol in Belize	Belize	Yes	$1,160,000
Advancing ABS implementation in Cambodia	Cambodia	Yes	$1,350,000
Biomanglar: Empowering Collective Territories through Conservation, Sustainable Use, and Restoration Initiatives of Mangroves to Contribute to Colombia's National Biodiversity Strategy	Colombia	No	$16,055,485
Blue Corridor: connectivity for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of marine ecosystems of global importance in the Southern Caribbean of Costa Rica	Costa Rica	No	$4,050,000
EcoHarmony RD: Advancing OECMs for Biodiversity Integration in Dominican Landscapes	Dominican Republic	Yes	$2,108,942
Enhancing Participatory Conservation and Restoration of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Yes	$4,319,999
Enhancing co-benefits of conservation area management through an inclusive wildlife-based ecotourism strategy (WILDLIFE ECOTOURISM)	Indonesia	No	$7,000,000
Restoring Forest Ecosystem Functions Through Community-Based Management in the Royal Botanic Garden of Jordan	Jordan	No	$870,000
Strengthening Biodiversity in Agriculture, Restoring Ecosystem Resilience, and Empowering IPLCs in Lao PDR	Lao PDR	Yes	$1,960,000
Sustainable Financing and Inclusive Management to Perpetuate Madagascar's Locally Managed Marine Areas	Madagascar	Yes	$5,934,747
Effective protection of Mozambique's Miombo woodlands and marine hotspot conservation areas enhancing global coping mechanisms to climate change	Mozambique	Yes	$4,876,006
Conservation of Endangered cold water fish species for sustainable livelihoods of fishing Communities in Middle Trishuli River Basin, Central Nepal	Nepal	Yes	$1,508,505
Scaling up biodiversity-positive and culturally inclusive agrifood and agritourism systems in Palau	Palau	Yes	$1,160,000
Advancing integrated participatory spatial planning to enhance Samoa's globally significant biodiversity at a national scale	Samoa	Yes	$1,160,000
Philippines Biodiversity Financing Program	Philippines	No	$4,000,000

Strengthening Globally Significant Biodiversity Corridors in the Philippines through Local Community Empowerment	Philippines	No	$3,000,000
Support for the development of protected areas for the conservation of biodiversity	Senegal	Yes	$1,749,625
Reimagining National Parks for People and Nature – Leveraging Durable Financing Mechanisms for Mega Living Landscapes (MLL) to achieve Target 3 in South Africa	South Africa	No	$5,000,000
Totals	**18 Countries**	**12 SIDS/LDC**	**$70,523,309**

B2. Describe where the programme is on/off track to contribute to the expected outcomes and impact. What action is planned in the year ahead?

The outcome level indicators are all derived from GBF Fund Core Indicators and align with the relevant UK International Climate Finance (ICF) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). For the ICF KPI indicators where milestones have been set, both outcomes met expectations. However, the GBF Fund has only given final approval to projects representing 35% ($137m) of the total funding pot available ($386m). Whereas the indicator milestones assume a 50% funding distribution (second year of four). Further funding is expected to be approved in the next 12 months.

Full progress made against the five outcome indicators is summarised below:

Outcome indicator	Baseline	Year 2 milestone	Annual progress	Progress against milestone
KPI 1 Number of people supported to cope with the effects of climate change (thousands)	0	NA*	54.6	N/A*
KPI 6 Greenhouse gas emissions reduced or avoided (m tCO2e)	0	12.4	17.9	Met expectations
KPI 11 Volume of public finance mobilised (£m)	0	NA*	13.7	Evidence of limited delivery**
KPI 12 Volume of private finance mobilised (£m)	0	NA*	2.7	Evidence of limited delivery**
KPI 17 Hectares of land (m) that have received sustainable land management practices	0	6.9	8.2	Met expectations

** In the absence of past portfolio-level monitoring of beneficiary data, and no GBF Fund portfolio-level targets set by the GEF, no overall target nor annual milestones target have been set for the duration of the programme.*

*** Note: To give some indication of whether these represent good evidence of strong delivery, this assessment is based on the extent to which the co-financing level matches the co-financing ratio for the GEF8 portfolio of projects, which is $7 raised for every $1 of GEF financing.*

The GEF governance structure includes an Independent Evaluation Unit (IEO). The IEO have conducted a second formative evaluation of the GBF Fund[1], providing insights on the GBF Fund's design, operations and strategic direction. The evaluation is positive, highlighting that the GBF Fund "*occupies a distinct and strategically relevant niche within the GEF Family of Funds*" and has demonstrated "*strong early performance as a catalytic financing mechanism*". The GBF Fund complements the GEF-8 programming on biodiversity and has provided a test bed for operational changes to be piloted, including an accelerated project cycle, International Financial Institutions (IFI) participation targets, and IPLC financing allocations, which have recently been incorporated into the GEF9 programming directions. Further evaluations will be completed by the IEO as the GBF Fund programming and operations mature. IEO evaluations are comprehensive, and no additional formal evaluations will be completed by the UK programme team.

[1] *Formative Evaluation of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund*, Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility, 2026: GEF_EN_Formative_Evaluation_GBFF1_0.pdf.

B3. Justify whether the programme should continue, based on its own merits and in the context of the wider portfolio

The programme should continue because it remains strategically relevant, has a substantial approved and provisionally allocated portfolio, and has demonstrated institutional additionality within the GEF family of funds. Approved projects contribute to UK ICF indicators, while the Fund's streamlined project cycle and IPLC financing approach are influencing wider GEF programming. However, final project approval has so far only allocated 35% of available resources, several output indicators remain below milestone, and the co-financing ratio is materially below the Business Case benchmark. The UK should therefore continue its investment while using its Council role to press for faster approvals, stronger portfolio-level reporting, improved co-financing performance and delivery against SIDS/LDC and IFI targets.

The GBF Fund continues to provide important financial support to help developing countries deliver the GBF and tackle biodiversity loss in line with international commitments. Expected results from the second year of operation are generally lower than in the first year, with smaller project ticket sizes, however funding to SIDS and LDCs is significantly higher.

The approved portfolio contributes to UK ICF objectives through expected benefits for climate resilience, emissions reduction and sustainable land management. Detailed indicator values are presented in sections B2 and C1. For the continuation decision, the material point is that the portfolio has demonstrated relevance to UK objectives but has not yet provided sufficient realised-results evidence to assure effectiveness at scale. In addition, the GBF Fund has so far mobilised an additional $319m in anticipated co-financing – a ratio of $2.3 for every $1 of GEF resourcing – contributing to ICF KPI 11 (volume of public finance mobilised) and KPI 12 (volume of private finance).

The value of the GBF Fund is also worth more than the funding approved and the estimated project level outputs. The GBF Fund has demonstrated additionality by piloting a streamlined project cycle, setting an aspirational allocation for IPLC-led action and opening a channel for non-sovereign contributions. The first two changes have influenced GEF9 programming; the third has not yet generated private or philanthropic contributions and remains an area for further action by the GEF Secretariat through delivery of the new GBF Fund Resource Mobilisation Strategy.

C. DETAILED OUTPUT SCORING

Output Title	GBF Fund funded projects demonstrate tangible beneficial results for biodiversity		
Output number:	1	Output Score:	***B***
Impact weighting (%):	100	Weighting revised since last AR?	No

Indicator(s)	**Year 2 Milestone**	**Expected Progress to date**	**Progress against annual milestone**
1.1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (million hectares)	2.0	2.3	Met expectations
1.2 Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (million hectares)	0.4	4.6	Significantly exceeded expectations
1.3 Area of land and ecosystems undergoing **restoration** (thousand hectares)	33.1	11.9	Significantly did not meet expectations
1.4 Area of landscapes under **improved practices,** excluding protected areas (million hectares)	2.7	1.7	Did not meet expectations
1.5 Area of marine habitat under **improved practices,** excluding protected areas (million hectares)	1.8	0.1	Significantly did not meet expectations

1.6 Number of direct beneficiaries of GEF investment, disaggregated by gender as co-benefit (thousand)	N/A	66.3 (of which women: 50%)	N/A
1.7 Co-financing ratio of GBF Fund projects (e.g. £7 of private project financing provided as a direct result of £1 of GBF Fund financing is a co-financing ratio of 7:1)	7:1	2.3:1	Significantly did not meet expectations
1.8 36 percent + 3 percent of funding allocated to small island developing States (SIDS)/least developed countries (LDCs	39%	26%	Did not meet expectations
1.9 25 percent to be programmed through international financing institutions (IFIs)	25%	13%	Did not meet expectations
1.10 Share of 20 percent of funding by 2030 to support actions by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)	20%	33%	Exceeded expectations

C1. Briefly describe the output's activities and provide supporting narrative for the score.

The output is scored B because expected results are uneven but broadly credible at this stage of the Fund's development. Expected project outputs are developed and refined during the project planning stage. The project proposal, including monitoring and results are scrutinised by the experienced staff of the GEF Secretariat before final approval. This process increases the level of confidence in the results.

Three indicators exceed their annual milestones, while five are below milestone and two do not have assessable milestones. The strongest performance is in marine protected areas and IPLC-related allocation; the largest shortfalls in expected results are in restoration, improved marine practices outside protected areas and co-financing. The score also recognises that only 35% of available resources had reached final approval by the review cut-off, so the current portfolio is not yet representative of the full funding envelope. This is a judgement on expected results, not realised delivery

Despite a similar level of funding allocated to endorsed projects this year ($70m) compared to last year ($66m), aggregate results are significantly less overall. There are more projects supporting more countries, but each with a smaller average grant. This means more countries are benefiting and receiving funding against their priorities, but which potentially reduces economies of scale. There is still a strong pipeline of projects (worth $225m) awaiting approval.

Expected results from approved projects are in line with expectations for some indicators and below for others. There has been greater than expected progress across two out of the ten indicators that significantly exceeding expectations. One indicator (1.2: Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use) continues to deliver well beyond the milestone for the total funding available. One project level indicator (1.5: Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity) achieved very little progress against the expected results. Whereas one indicator (1.3: Area of land and ecosystems under restoration) has shown a marked increase in projected outputs, even though it still falls under the target milestone. This could be due to the recipient countries' focus on conservation of terrestrial and marine protected areas, which demonstrates the flexibility of the GBF Fund to deliver on country priorities and the need to consider a version of 'success' that covers the full breadth of indicators. One indicator on the number of direct beneficiates did not have a target or milestone but showed gender balance.

At a portfolio level, three indicators (1.7, 1.8, 1.9) did not achieve the expected results, but indicators 1.8 and 1.9 show a marked improvement from the last annual review. One indicator (1.10 Share of funding to support actions by IPLCs) significantly exceeded expectations. This year, the GEF Secretary applied specific additional criteria for project proposals during one of the funding application rounds to enhance the number of successful proposals from IFI and SIDS/LDCs. The results of those priority requirements will be seen in the next Annual Review in 2027, when a greater share of SIDS/LDCs and IFI implemented projects are expected.

There are a further 54 projects, worth $225 million, that were pending final approval at the review cut-off. If approved with their expected results unchanged, the combined approved and pipeline portfolio would meet the 39% SIDS/LDC target and exceed the targets for IPLC-led action and IFI programming.

Although indicating a strong pipeline, these projections are not yet secured: final approval, project design changes and subsequent implementation may alter both allocations and results.

All nineteen approved GBF Fund projects approved in the review year incorporated gender equality and social considerations in a substantive way, complying with GEF requirements and GBF Fund Programming Directions to support gender-responsive implementation of the GBF. All the projects will contribute to delivering GBF target 22 (on IPLCs) and target 23 (on gender equality) by addressing issues of rights and access to land and natural resources and ensuring women's full and meaningful participation and leadership at all levels of biodiversity action. The Defra ODA Programme's GEDSI assessment and action plan included an action to broaden understanding of gender equality and further improve gender-responsive project design. In 2025, building on work to advance gender equality and social inclusion and advance the role of Indigenous Peoples and other observers in GBF Fund project reviews and the project cycle the GEF prepared guidelines at the GBF Fund Council's request on actions by IPLCs. These guidelines underwent extensive consultation with Council members, agencies, observers, the Advisory Group and a wider set of IPLC representatives.

C2. Describe any changes to this output during the past year, and any planned changes as a result of this review.

At the first annual review in June 2025, the proportion of total available funding that was from the UK was determined based on value of UK funding provided in the form of promissory notes in that year. The overlapping timings of additional UK promissory notes, project proposals, provisional allocation and final approval across the two selection rounds do not align neatly and mean that we cannot explicitly track the UK contribution against the outcomes of specific projects. Therefore, this annual adopts a methodology change to better reflect the relative and changing contribution of UK funding to meeting outcomes and outputs.

For the 2026 Annual Review, the programme uses a fixed attribution share for the UK contribution rather than linking annual UK payments to particular selection rounds. The UK's £55 million contribution is treated as 18.9% of the $386 million funding envelope, and this share is applied consistently to cumulative expected results from projects receiving final approval. This method removes distortions caused by the timing of promissory notes, provisional allocations and project approvals, but it assumes that all donor resources contribute proportionately to portfolio results.

The GBF Fund Council have approved an updated GBF Fund Results Framework based on relevant indicators from the existing GEF reporting framework and incorporating suitable indicators from the GBF Monitoring Framework. All new GBF Fund project submissions will be required to report against the new GBF Fund Results Framework from July 2026. Therefore, currently no changes have been made to the programme logframe to reflect the new GBF Fund Results Framework, but further work will be required ahead of the next Annual Review in 2027.

The current set of Output indicators lacks an indicator to explicitly track poverty reduction. Because poverty reduction is not captured in the headline indicators of the GBF Monitoring Framework, the new GBF Fund Results Framework does not yet have a poverty indicator as standard. However, relevant indicators to capture socio-economic benefits are under development for the GEF Trust Fund to be rolled out in GEF9 replenishment period (2026-2030). These will be introduced into the GBF Fund Results Framework when available.

D: RISK

Overview of risk management

The overall programme risk rating is **medium.** This reflects the GBF Fund's geographic and delivery complexity, the limited number of projects currently in the implementation phase, reliance on multiple implementing agencies and remaining gaps in portfolio-level monitoring and reporting. These risks are partly mitigated by the GEF Secretariat's experience, established fiduciary and safeguarding frameworks, and Defra's quarterly risk review. The large pipeline may improve future output coverage, but it also increases execution, oversight and fraud exposure as more projects enter implementation; it should therefore be monitored as both an opportunity and a risk.

The Defra programme team hold quarterly risk meetings to discuss risks, risk mitigation and update a programme risk register. These meetings look at risks including resource pressures, programme and financial management, as well as gaps in monitoring and reporting. The programme risk appetite for the six risk categories remains the same:

- Strategic and project risk appetite remains open, given the flexible approach of the GBF Fund to support delivery of the GBF globally.
- Operational, fiduciary, safeguarding and reputational risk appetite remains cautious, which recognises there is inherent risk in project investment, but that the GEF has strong policies, safeguards and other mitigation measures in place to limit exposure.

Trends in residual risk ratings for individual risks are either level or downwards, and no risks are considered high following the implementation of planned mitigation strategies.

The GEF Council approved the GEF Risk Appetite document at the 66th GEF Council Meeting in February 2024. This document sets out the level of risk that the GEF is prepared to take on in all its programming, including the GBF Fund, and its approach to identifying, monitoring and reporting risks. This includes annual reporting on risk, with each work programme submission to the Council including a summary analysis of the programme's risk profile. The Risk Appetite Statement will be reviewed and revised for each new replenishment phase, starting with GEF9, which began in July 2026.

The GBF Fund work programmes contain a risk assessment against the GEF Risk Framework of the large projects submitted for Council approval. In the latest work programme prepared for the 6th GBF Fund Council meeting in June 2026, the residual Contextual risk level was assessed as 'substantial', and the Innovation and Execution risk levels both assessed as 'moderate'. This reflects the difficult climate and environmental risks faced by the projects, but also that they are being delivered in line with the UK's risk appetite. For greater transparency, the UK is continuing to work with the GEF Secretariat to develop and publish a portfolio level risk assessment for all projects pending approval under the GBF Fund, and not just the larger-scale projects.

Fraud risk is currently assessed as low. There have been no reported cases of potential fraud to date. This reflects GEF's fiduciary controls but also the low volume of disbursed funding to the limited number of projects under implementation. The Defra/FCDO Programme Team have also been engaged in GEF Council discussions on fiduciary risk policy. Specific evidence of project level due diligence and mitigation measures includes the use of third-party financial administrators and checks to ensure that new Conservation Trust Funds meet international standards and donor requirements before any funds are transferred. However, this judgement should not be taken to mean that underlying exposure is low: the number of projects, implementing partners and transactions will increase as more of the GBF Fund portfolio moves into implementation. The programme team should therefore agree with the GEF Secretariat how fraud reporting, assurance and escalation will strengthen as disbursement grows.

Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) risk is currently assessed as low, in line with the SEAH risk assessment conducted by the Defra programme team in 2024. There have been no reported cases of SEAH within GEF or GBF Fund funded projects to date. The Defra programme team have worked closely with FCDO to ensure the due diligence of SEAH policies. The assessment relies on implementing agencies' due diligence, environmental and social safeguards, grievance mechanisms and project-level mitigation, including Free, Prior and Informed Consent protocols and gender action plans where relevant. As the portfolio expands, Defra should confirm that reporting routes, assurance evidence and escalation arrangements remain adequate across all implementing agencies.

The GEF Secretariat's GBF Fund Risk assessment produced for the June 2026 work programme highlighted specific risks at a project level. For example, in the proposed CONSERVE project in India, moderate environmental and social risk are managed through a comprehensive Environmental and Social Management Framework and Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) protocols, and a Gender Action Plan mandating at least 50 percent women's representation in governance bodies.

E: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT: DELIVERY, COMMERCIAL & FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Summarise the performance of partners and Defra, notably on commercial and financial issues.

Partner performance has been strong on governance and fund administration but more mixed on conversion of programmed resources into approved and implemented projects. The GEF Secretariat and World Bank Trustee have established the Fund, completed five oversubscribed selection rounds, provisionally allocated 94% of available resources and provided regular Council and financial reporting. However, only 35% of resources have reached final project approval by the review cut-off and private and philanthropic contributions to the GBF Fund have not materialised. Defra and FCDO have maintained effective Council engagement and financial oversight. The priority for the next year is to use that engagement to secure faster approvals, stronger reporting and progress on resource mobilisation.

Fund Establishment and Operationalisation

The GEF Secretariat established the GBF Fund at pace following the decision at UN CBD COP15 in December 2022 that requested a new dedicated, biodiversity fund. The GBF Fund's processes and modalities were agreed at the first GBF Fund Council meeting in June 2023, and the GBF Fund was officially established at the 7th GEF Assembly in August 2023 (the quadrennial meeting of all GEF members). The GBF Fund launched its first funding round in February 2024, with the first work programme for approval prepared in June 2024. The fifth and latest round of funding closed in December 2025, resulting in the allocation of the majority of GBF Fund resources available.

There has been significant demand for GBF Fund finance from recipient countries since launch, with every funding round oversubscribed. Across the five funding rounds, over 200 project proposals were submitted, valued at almost $1bn. In total, $362.1 million has been programmed for 82 project proposals benefiting 87 countries, including 47 SIDS and LDCs.

The GBF Fund has implemented a streamlined project proposal and approval cycle, to reduce the time between project proposal and funding disbursement when compared to the main GEF Trust Fund. The success of the GBF Fund modalities has led the way for wider adoption of the approach across the GEF family of funds.

The GBF Fund was established with the unique remit to receive and channel contributions from both sovereign sources and non-state actors. To date, contributions to the GBF Fund have mostly come from sovereign states, with one contribution from a sub-regional government. No contributions have been provided by private or philanthropic organisations. The GEF Secretariat have reported that they have been engaging with the private sector to encourage contributions and are confident that a private contribution is forthcoming. The GEF has experience engaging business and catalysing private sector investment through its Trust Fund, however further consideration will be needed on how to draw in private sector contributions to the GBF Fund. The potential impact and reach of the GBF Fund would increase with a wider source of contributions, therefore further work is needed to boost private sector engagement and incentivise non-sovereign contributions.

The GBF Fund Council approved a Resource Mobilisation Strategy for the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund 2026-2030, which has been revised based on recommendations from an Ad Hoc Working Group on Predictability in Financing. The GEF Secretariat has been tasked with enhancing efforts to mobilise resources from all sources in line with the ambition in the document and will provide an annual progress update on GBF Fund resource mobilisation to the Council.

In March 2026, the GBF Fund Trustee (the World Bank) outlined the administrative cost of delivering the GBF Fund. Since the GBF Fund's inception in 2024, 3.1% of available funding has been spent on administration and 8.2% spent on project fees. The Independent Evaluation Office's (IEO) second formative evaluation of the GBF Fund finds that it "*occupies a distinct and strategically relevant niche within the GEF Family of Funds*", with emphasis on governance reform and IPLC representation and participation. The GBF Fund is complementary to GEF Family of Funds and is well aligned with a subset of high-priority GBF targets, whilst also reflecting country-driven priorities. The IEO recommends greater coordination across the GEF, strengthen feedback to unsuccessful projects, an emphasis on implementing the enhanced results framework, and improve reporting on whole-of-society participation and governance.

Narrative and Financial Reporting

As the GBF Fund is a pooled multilateral fund there is no bilateral narrative or financial reporting, and the GEF manage alignment with Partis Agreement on the UK's behalf. The GEF Secretariat publishes progress reports and evaluations via the GBF Fund Council. The most recent progress report was published and discussed at the 6th GBF Fund Council meeting in June 2026.

The Trustee facilitates the mobilisation of resources for the GBF Fund and manages and disburses funds to Implementing Agencies. The Trustee also monitors the use of funds and, where necessary, requests the return of funds if progress on project delivery is not being made. The Trustee supports the GEF secretariat in preparing workplans and pipelines for Council and works directly with donors. The Trustee creates financial reports, including income, investment and expenditure reports, which are published on the GEF Trustee website. The UK works closely with the Trustee when preparing to deposit UK Promissory Notes and agreeing encashment schedules in line with the GBF Fund's pipeline of activities.

E2. Assess the Value for Money (VfM) of this output compared to the proposition in the Business Case, based on performance over the past year

VfM performance compared to the original VfM proposition in the business case

The table below compares the 2024 Business Case projections for a £100 million programme with expected results from $137 million of all approved GBF Fund projects. Results per £1 million are used to normalise the comparison, using a set USD to GBP exchange rate. The assessment is indicative because it compares modelled Business Case outputs with expected, not realised, project results.

	Business Case	Approved GBFF projects	Business Case (results per £m)	GBF Fund (results per £m)*
Cost	£100m	$137m	-	-
Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management, Mha	7.4	14.9	0.074	0.15
Marine protected areas created or under improved management, Mha	1.5	30.5	0.015	0.30
Land and ecosystems under restoration, Mha	0.12	0.08	0.001	0.001
Landscapes under improved practices (excl. protected areas), Mha	9.8	11.4	0.10	0.11
Marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (excl. protected areas), Mha	6.5	0.5	0.065	0.005
Greenhouse gas emission mitigated, Mt CO_2e	45	118.5	0.45	1.20
Finance mobilized for biodiversity projects	£700m	$319m	£7.0m	£2.3m
- of which private	£150m	$41m	£1.5m	£0.30m

*Exchange rate of 0.75 GBP : 1 USD

The current evidence supports a provisional, qualified judgement on value for money. Four of seven indicators deliver more expected results per £1 million than projected in the Business Case, particularly terrestrial and marine protected areas and greenhouse-gas mitigation. Two indicators performed significantly less well than expectations, including marine habitat management outside protected areas and finance mobilisation. Because all these figures are based on expected rather than realised results, and only part of the portfolio has reached final approval, it is too early to conclude that the programme represents value for money overall. The appropriate conclusion is that value for money is likely but not yet demonstrated and should be reassessed as approved projects enter implementation and actual results become available.

Assessment of whether the programme continues to represent value for money

The following VfM assessment has been undertaken consistent with Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) guidance. This recommends that all programmes are assessed against the following four VfM categories:

- Economy - Are we (or our agents) buying inputs of the appropriate quality at the right price?
- Efficiency – How well are we (or our agents) converting inputs into outputs?
- Effectiveness – How well are the outputs produced by an intervention having the intended effect?
- Equity – To what extent are Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) considerations incorporated into the intervention?

Despite not currently delivering to expectations across the full range of Output indicators, the GBF Fund continues to show evidence of strong delivery. The GBF Fund is designed to fill gaps in existing funding delivery landscape. As highlighted above, the $137m of funding that has been approved is expected to deliver greater results on protected areas and greenhouse gas emission reduction than was projected in the 2024 business case. The GBF Fund is also on track to deliver against its portfolio level targets on funding for SIDS/LDCs and IPLCs when considering the potential results from all available funding provisionally allocated to projects. Therefore, the programme is likely to demonstrate value for money overall.

Economy
The rigorous project selection process has ensured that the approved projects are good value for money. Even though only around one third of available funding has been allocated to approved projects, the current portfolio of has already significantly over delivered against expectations on one of the output indicators (Marine protected areas).

Efficiency
The competitive element of the GBF Fund ensures the funding is provided to the best projects that deliver the greatest, or most strategically relevant, outputs for biodiversity, in line with the project selection criteria. This is supported by the GEF Secretariat's significant experience administering multilateral funds.

An important role of GEF funding is to leverage additional funding steams. While bilateral UK-funded interventions may be more impactful for meeting UK interests in terms of thematic and geographic targeting, they could be less effective in responding to changing country priorities and funding projects that deliver global environmental benefits in support of the GBF. The current co-financing ratio of 2.3:1 is below the 7:1 ratio used in the Business Case, which was derived from the wider GEF-8 portfolio. This is a demanding comparator rather than a formal GBF Fund target. Performance should therefore be reported against both the Business Case assumption and any GBF Fund-specific benchmark adopted through the new Results Framework, with differences in portfolio maturity and project mix explained. Therefore, further work is required at a project level to increase the efficacy of the concessional finance provided by the GBF Fund in leveraging other sources of funding for future projects.

Effectiveness
To date, the GBF Fund is effectively delivering on its broad geographic remit to assist ODA-eligible countries in tackling major environmental problems and focus finance to countries with high levels of biodiversity and those with the greatest need or least capacity. 26 national and regional projects have been approved benefiting 26 countries across central and South America, western and southern Africa and the pacific islands, ensuring that the funds continue to have a significant global impact.

Equity. The GEF has been working in partnership with Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLC) since its inception. They are one of the first International Finance Institutions to adopt an independent policy to support engagement with IPLCs, which provides the basis for participation of Indigenous People in all aspects of the GEF's work, actively involving them in hundreds of projects including the Small Grants Programmes. The GBF Fund has set an aspirational target of providing at least 20% of funding to projects that support actions by IPLCs. To date, the GBF Fund is on track to meet this target, with 33% of allocated funding expected to support IPLC-led activities. To support those countries most in need, the GBF Fund has also set a target to allocate 39% of funding to LDCs and SIDs. In the first 26 projects, only 26% of funds will reach LDCs or SIDS. However, this is likely to increase to 38% through the strong pipeline of provisionally approved projects.

Date of last narrative financial report	March 2026	Date of last audited annual statement	N/A