

Wildlife & Countryside Link
N101C Vox Studios
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Sir Ed Davey
Leader of the Liberal Democrats,
Lib Dem HQ,
1 Vincent Square,
London SW1P 3AE.

6 June 2024

Dear Sir Ed,

We are writing to ask you to commit to the ambitious action needed to restore the UK's natural environment and to set out your plans ahead of the General Election.

The next Westminster Government has a legal obligation to halt the decline of wildlife in England by 2030. As the Office for Environmental Protection has concluded, the Government is not on track to meet this target, and we have yet to see credible plans from any of the main political parties to stop the ongoing destruction of nature.

Nature's decline is already harming the economy, and failure to halt ecosystem degradation would have serious consequences. The health of our natural world is intrinsically linked to our wellbeing, productivity and economic prosperity. 12% of GDP could be lost as a result of nature-related risks (more than the decline in economic growth caused by the 2008 global financial crisis), communities lack access to nature-rich green and blue space, and we risk losing precious wildlife forever.

By contrast, restoring nature and bringing our natural world back to life would bring huge benefits for the UK. With cross-party support, the Westminster government set the world's first legally-binding target to halt nature's decline by 2030. That was a triumph of ambition and long-term thinking and science-based policymaking. Success would help solve so many of the social and economic issues the UK is grappling with, from a better future for farming, to a more resilient health service.

But unless things change and political parties step up and follow the scientific evidence, the UK will fail to live up to this vital promise. The Office for Environmental Protection says Government must scale up and speed up action or we will not halt nature's decline. The consequences will be felt for generations to come.

Our organisations have a combined membership of more than 8 million people, part of a much wider community of people in the UK and around the world who want a better future for nature. We are writing to the leaders of the UK's larger political parties to ask you to explain how you would meet this historic challenge—and the legally-binding target—if you were elected.

Please don't let the pressures of short-term politics get in the way of simple fact: nature is in a perilously poor state and getting worse, to everyone's detriment. Wildlife has declined by 32% in England since 1970 and 1 in 8 species are at risk of extinction in the UK. We cannot go on like this. How would you turn things around and safeguard our future? The public deserve to know your plans.

Yours sincerely,

Beccy Speight, CEO, RSPB

Craig Bennett, CEO, The Wildlife Trusts

Tanya Steele, CEO, WWF UK

Hilary McGrady, Director General, The National Trust

Dr Darren Moorcroft, CEO, The Woodland Trust

Sarah Fowler, CEO, WWT

Ian Dunn, CEO, Plantlife

Laura Clarke, CEO, ClientEarth

Dr Rose O'Neill, CEO, Campaign for National Parks

Nida Al-Fulaij, CEO, People's Trust for Endangered Species

Dr Mark Avery, Director, Wild Justice

Hugh Knowles and Miriam Turner, Co-Executive Directors, Friends of the Earth

Matt Larsen-Daw, CEO, The Mammal Society

Julie Williams, CEO, Butterfly Conservation

Professor Jeremy Biggs, CEO, Freshwater Habitats Trust.

Kit Stoner, CEO, Bat Conservation Trust

Gill Perkins, CEO, Bumblebee Conservation Trust

Dr Stephen Head, Founder Patron, Wildlife Gardening Forum

Chris Butler-Stroud, CEO, Whale & Dolphin Conservation

Matt Collis, Deputy Vice President, Policy, IFAW

Allison Ogden-Newton OBE, Chief Executive, Keep Britain Tidy

Kathy Wormald, CEO, Froglife

Matthew Gould, CEO, ZSL

Sandy Luk, CEO, Marine Conservation Society

Clare Brook, CEO, Blue Marine

Catherine Gunby, Executive Director, FIDRA

Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary, Open Spaces Society

Helen Browning, CEO, The Soil Association

Hugo Tagholm, Executive Director & Vice President, Oceana UK

Ross Maloney, CEO, The Ramblers

Andy Atkins, CEO, A Rocha UK

Nick Measham, CEO, WildFish

James Wallace, CEO, River Action

Prof Alastair Driver FCIEEM, Director, Rewilding Britain

Sally Hayns, CEO, CIEEM

Dr Tony Gent, CEO, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Kate Sheldon, CEO, Trees for Cities

Sue Sayer MBE, Director, the Seal Research Trust

Jamie Christon, CEO, Chester Zoo

Paul Ratcliffe, CEO, British Mountaineering Council

Jamie Cook, CEO, Angling Trust

Peter Hambly, Executive Director, The Badger Trust

Mark Lloyd, CEO, The Rivers Trust

Dr Jayne Manley, CEO, The Earth Trust

Mark Lloyd, CEO, The Rivers Trust

Ashley Metcalfe, CEO, Paddle UK

Matthew Orman, Director, Sustainable Soils Alliance

Dr Anna Watson, Director of Policy & Advocacy, CHEM Trust

Dr Mark Jones, veterinarian, Head of Policy, Born Free Foundation

Dr Richard Benwell, CEO, Wildlife & Countryside Link