

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Her Majesty's Treasury
1, Horse Guards Road,
London SW1A 2HQ

20 August 2020

The National Nature Service

Dear Chancellor

In June, a wide-ranging group of business leaders, environmental charities, public authorities, youth groups and other charities wrote to you in support of a National Nature Service (NNS). In this letter, we offer more detail about the core features that would be needed for an effective programme.

A National Nature Service can create new and on-going paid environmental jobs in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country and improve access to nature, enhance climate resilience and grow our natural capital. We propose three pillars to give it the substance it needs to deliver at scale.

1. Investment in the National Nature Service

- a. **Paid jobs and an 'on-the-job' training programme.** The heart of the NNS should be an environmental employment programme, paying a living wage and offering the training opportunities needed for ongoing employment in a greener economy. It should be open to everyone, but with a particular focus on young people and disadvantaged communities. Mixed groups of graduates and non-graduates could work on programmes focused on tree-planting or invasive species removal, moving on to more specialist skills like sustainable woodland management and complex habitat creation and restoration.
- b. **Investment in delivery partner organisations.** Effective delivery partners will need to be funded to manage work and training. Organisations such as environmental NGOs and National Park authorities have the strongest credentials for this role, but are facing severe financial constraints caused by Covid-19. A programme operating in isolation that supported creation of new jobs but tolerated large-scale redundancies in the sector and allowed more skilled roles to be lost would do more damage than good.

By building on the skills of these organisations as paid partners to provide the supervisory support as well as significant elements of the training capacity, we can ensure that the work contributes to meeting the Government's environmental ambitions and in parallel build a skilled workforce with applied conservation skills translatable into the wider UK economy.

The estimated cost of delivering 12,000 jobs, on-the-job training and the necessary support from the delivery partners is £500 million per annum. We believe that the welcome Kickstart scheme, intended like the NNS to provide new employment, could provide some of this funding; £200 million from the scheme could contribute towards NNS wage costs for new rangers.

2. Investment in the supporting project pipeline.

Projects like urban afforestation, grassland restoration, re-greening the green belt, natural flood relief, peatland and wetland restoration, invasive species control and bee line or road verge wildflower projects to support native plant species and pollinators would provide a green core of work for the National Nature Service. Projects such as these will have lasting social and environmental benefits and significantly contribute to meeting the UK's carbon targets.

Wildlife and Countryside Link has already compiled £350 million of "shovel ready" projects that could be delivered by the end of the next financial year. Work by Link members suggests that a further £615m a year investment is needed each year to achieve the Government's nature priorities in the 25 Year Environment Plan, in addition to maintaining the current annual spending of £2.2bn per year on environmental land management.

The proposed expansion of natural infrastructure facilitated by the NNS would provide benefits including improved public health outcomes from increased urban green space, homes protected from flooding, secured food supplies and increased tourism, strengthening our economy and making it more resilient.

3. A green legislative programme

The skills developed in a National Nature Service should be targeted toward supporting a sustained greener economy for the future. To ensure that new private sector and public sector jobs are created that will enable NNS participants to transition into on-going paid work, it is essential that the Government's programme of environmental reforms is strengthened as part of a green recovery.

Environmental Land Management and biodiversity gain policies, along with Local Nature Recovery Strategies will stimulate on-going green job creation. From habitat creation and biodiversity net gain required of new development, to the intensive work required for environmental land management, or the range of new environmental advisory services needed in planning and farm management, successful delivery of the Environment Bill and Agriculture Bill depends on the expansion of a skilled environmental workforce. The current supply of these skills will not meet anticipated future demand. The NNS is not just a short term stop-gap but a proposition calibrated to fill skills needed for delivery of the Government's environmental ambitions.

If the three-pillars for success set out above are followed, a National Nature Service could deliver economic and environmental benefits on a significant scale

A National Nature Service combining paid work and training, guided by the expertise of environmental NGOs, fuelled by a significant expansion in natural infrastructure and sustained by a lasting demand for environmental skills would be an innovative and effective motor for a green recovery.

We would be delighted to discuss these proposals with you in more detail if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Carmel Edwards
Co-Chair
WCL NNS Group



Beth Thoren
Co-Chair
WCL NNS Group



Dr Richard Benwell
CEO
Wildlife & Countryside Link

Dr Tony Gent, CEO, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Jamie Cook, CEO, The Angling Trust

Kit Stoner, CEO, Bat Conservation Trust

Russel Hobson, Director of Evidence and Resources, Butterfly Conservation

Anita Konrad, CEO, Campaign for National Parks

Beth Thoren, Deputy CEO, ClientEarth

Brian da Cal, Director, FOUR PAWS UK

Dr Jeremy Biggs, Director, Freshwater Habitats Trust

Paul Coulson, Director of Operations, Institute of Fisheries Management

Andy Knott MBE, CEO, League Against Cruel Sports

Sandy Luk, CEO, Marine Conservation Society

Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary, The Open Spaces Society

Jill Nelson, CEO, People's Trust for Endangered Species

Ian Dunn, CEO, Plantlife

Prof Alastair Driver, Director, Rewilding Britain

Beccy Speight, CEO, RSPB

Adam Grogan, Head of Wildlife, RSPCA

Nick Measham, CEO, Salmon & Trout Conservation

Hugo Tagholm, CEO, Surfers Against Sewage

Chris Butler-Stroud, CEO, Whale and Dolphin Conservation

Dr Mark Avery, co-founder, Wild Justice

Patience Thody, Deputy CEO, The Wildlife Trusts

Dr Darren Moorcroft, CEO, The Woodland Trust

Dr James Robinson, Director of Conservation, WWT