

News release

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Time is now for new era of nature conservation

Natural Environment White Paper welcome

The publication of a White Paper on the Natural Environment - the first for 20 years - should mark an exciting new era for nature conservation. But has the Government been ambitious enough?

The Wildlife Trusts have pushed for the Government to take leadership and make the natural environment a priority. This White Paper is critical in setting a new direction. One in which the connections between a healthy natural environment, healthier people and a healthier economy are recognised.

The natural environment can produce significant benefits to society and the economy but, to do so effectively, there must be the right legislative framework and policy in place. Many people are currently suffering from a profound separation from the natural world. This framework – the White Paper – should enable people and communities to value, and take action for, wildlife.

Paul Wilkinson, Head of Living Landscape for The Wildlife Trusts, said:

“We want the Government to set out a new vision for nature’s recovery and so hope to welcome the content within this Natural Environment White Paper.

“Government needs to take a fresh look - and a smarter approach - at the way we use and manage the natural environment. Changes are essential and we expect to see clear evidence that the Government is committed to positive and ambitious change. A sound framework must be implemented, one which puts nature on the front foot and produces more benefits for people and for wildlife. It will take strong leadership and cross-departmental support.

“Government must take bold steps and make brave decisions. Society’s future is very closely linked to nature’s recovery.”



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Within the White Paper on the Natural Environment, The Wildlife Trusts will be looking for the Government to commit to:

- **Putting nature's recovery at the heart of all decisions on policy-making across all Government departments.**

The Wildlife Trusts want to see the recovery and restoration of the natural environment happening everywhere in the UK. As reported in the *Making Space for Nature*¹ report, England does not have a coherent and resilient ecological network. The report should be implemented in full; where priority areas for restoration on a landscape-scale are mapped out, and policies enforced, which protect their value.

The Wildlife Trusts have been delivering landscape-scale conservation on the ground on a voluntary basis but Government now needs to show leadership and make it a national priority.

- **Getting the policies and legislation right nationally to support people locally.**

The time is ripe for Government to make improvements which will give individuals, businesses and communities the power and support they need to take action, protecting and improving areas for wildlife, securing a full recovery for nature.

The Wildlife Trusts work to reconnect people to nature where they live. This approach needs to be given a firmer footing. Local partnerships need to be enabled to deliver landscape-scale conservation, habitat restoration and re-creation in their communities.

Paul Wilkinson continued:

“The Wildlife Trusts have championed a recovery plan for nature since 2006. A plan which helps to create a resilient and healthy environment, rich in wildlife, and one which provides ecological security for people. It is our vision for A Living Landscape.

“However, we currently find ourselves working amidst an array of policies and mechanisms that determine how land is used and managed. Few of these were designed with nature in mind and virtually none allow for its restoration. The time has come for the Government to help society achieve its ambitions for nature.”

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The Wildlife Trusts has an ISDN line available for radio interviews. Please contact us to book an interview.

Notes for editors:

- The importance of considering land of high nature conservation value for wildlife is highlighted in the *Making Space for Nature** report. <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/news/2010/09/24/nature-news/>
- In the build up to the 2010 General Election, The Wildlife Trusts called on the next Government to introduce a White Paper on Nature to identify the policy changes needed to restore our natural environment. A White Paper is a way for Government to lay out proposed changes to legislation and consult on them.
- There is no exact equivalent of the Natural Environment White Paper in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland as each country is at a different stage regarding their reviews of their land use planning and nature conservation legislation. However, through this White Paper process the Government may be able to establish some UK-wide principles for ecological restoration.
- The Wildlife Trusts (TWT) wildlifetrusts.org There are 47 individual Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK and the Isle of Man and Alderney. All are working for an environment rich in wildlife for everyone. We have more than 800,000 members including 150,000 members of our junior branch [Wildlife Watch](#).
- TWTs' vision is to create [A Living Landscape](#). This is a recovery plan for nature, championed since 2006, to help create a resilient and healthy environment rich in wildlife and provide ecological security for people. At the heart of this vision is the restoration of the natural environment.
- TWTs manage around 2,300 nature reserves and every year advise thousands of landowners and organisations on how to manage land for wildlife. We also run marine conservation projects around the UK, collecting vital data on the state of our seas and celebrating our amazing marine wildlife. Every year we work with thousands of schools and our nature reserves and visitor centres receive millions of visitors. Each Wildlife Trust is working within its local communities to inspire people about the future of their area: their own Living Landscapes and Living Seas.