



Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horseguards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

7 August 2006

Dear Chancellor

We are writing to raise concerns about alleged cuts of up to £200m from Defra's budget. Collectively, Wildlife and Countryside Link's members have the support of approximately 8.4 million people in the UK. We are alarmed that budgets appear to be being cut in such a drastic way. The short term benefit of such cuts will be substantially outweighed by the longer-term economic and environmental costs.

We are seriously worried that the budget for Natural England has been cut before the organisation has even been formally established, and support the assertion of Sir Martin Doughty, the new Chairman of Natural England, that "*the scale of these cuts risks the wheels coming off the organisation even before it reaches October's launchpad*". This organisation should be 'delivering more than the sum of its parts' from early on, and these cuts make that far less likely.

The Government has made significant advances towards more environmentally sustainable agriculture support, particularly through the agri-environment schemes. We are troubled by cuts to the funding of these schemes. Adequate funding of the higher-level Environmental Stewardship scheme is essential if Government commitments to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) are to be met, in terms of species and habitats. The scheme is also vital to ensure management and enhancement of traditional agricultural landscapes, their character, and their historic and archaeological features. Furthermore, despite recent progress, the delivery of well established Public Service Agreement targets for farmland birds and Sites of Special Scientific Interest will be jeopardised without adequate levels of funding. It is also the means by which wider public benefits, such as an attractive countryside available to all, can be delivered.

In the light of climate change, the case for continued investment in our environment should be more firmly on the agenda than ever in the run up to the Comprehensive Spending Review. Such investment will be essential to stay on track to halt biodiversity loss by 2010, and support the land management associated with important habitats and landscapes. Furthermore, healthy biodiversity will ensure that our ecosystems will continue to benefit society as a whole, while well managed and attractive rural landscapes are vital to the nation's well being, quality of life and attractiveness to tourists from around the world. Indeed, 40 percent of the jobs created through tourism



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"Bringing voluntary organisations in the UK together to protect and enhance wildlife and landscape, and to further the quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside"

Chair: Hilary Allison, Director: Alexia Wellbelove

Vice Presidents: Peter Ainsworth MP, David Kidney MP and Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

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rely directly on a high quality environment, and this increases to 60-70 percent in rural areas (Valuing our Environment, National Trust, 2001).

These cuts are being made against a backdrop of increasing public concern about the environment and climate change. The recent heatwave and drought have brought home to people the need to invest more, not less, in our environmental future.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Executives of Environmental NGOs

Cc: Rt Hon David Miliband MP - Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Arlin Rickard
Director, Association of Rivers Trusts

Amy Coyte
Chief Executive, Bat Conservation Trust

Matt Shardlow
Director, Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust

Martin Warren
Chief Executive, Butterfly Conservation

Mike Heyworth
Director, Council for British Archaeology

Kathy Moore
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Tony Juniper
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Simon Reddy
Director, Policy & Solutions, Greenpeace UK

Linda Bennett
Director, The Hawk and Owl Trust

Dr Tony Gent
Chief Executive Officer, The Herpetological Conservation Trust

Robbie Marsland
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Sam Fanshawe
Director of Conservation, Marine Conservation Society

Tony Burton
Director of Policy and Strategy, National Trust

Kate Ashbrook
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Dr Steve Head
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Christine Elliott
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Mark Simmonds
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Dr Glyn Davies
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