

Wildlife and
Countryside



Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

2 February 2004

Dear Prime Minister,

We are deeply concerned by reports that the Government is considering cutting £5 billion of environmental spending from plans for water company investment. As Chief Executives of leading environmental organisations, we believe these cutbacks will seriously threaten the condition of our rivers, lakes and seas.

The reported proposals scapegoat environmental investment as the major driver for water price rises. This is regrettable, since it is only one component of current industry proposals, and has already been subject to the most rigorous scrutiny. The same cannot be said for huge costs associated with other parts of company plans. If it is necessary to limit price rises, plans must be re-considered as a whole, rather than the focus being exclusively (and unjustifiably) on the environment.

We understand that the cuts currently being promoted by Ofwat would strip away almost half the proposed spending on nature conservation schemes. This would seriously diminish the value of a price review which has the potential to be the first to address, in a comprehensive way, water company damage to wildlife sites.

The pressure being exerted to cut back on environmental spending is all the more difficult to understand given the small scale of projected bill reductions which would result. These savings would amount to just £2 per household per year, surely not sufficient justification for a course of action which would risk squandering our most precious natural assets. We also believe such proposals would be unlikely to win wide support from water customers, whom research suggests are willing to pay for urgently needed environmental measures.

We strongly urge that you reconsider this position, and ensure that government supports a robust and forward-looking programme of environmental investment.

Yours sincerely

Chief Executives of Environmental NGOs

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



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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: Pippa Langford
Wildlife Countryside Link (WCL) Limited Company No. 3889519



Graham Wynne, Chief Executive
RSPB



Amy Coyte, Chief Executive
Bat Conservation Trust



Matt Shardlow, Conservation Director
Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust



Martin Warren, Chief Executive
Butterfly Conservation



George Lambrick, Director
Council for British Archaeology



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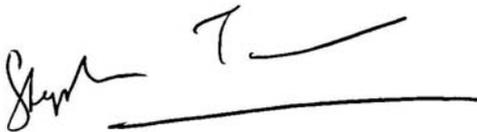
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Kathy Moore, Chief Executive
Council for National Parks



Tony Juniper, Chief Executive
Friends of the Earth



Stephen Tindale, Chief Executive
Greenpeace



Tony Gent, Chief Executive
Herpetological Conservation Trust



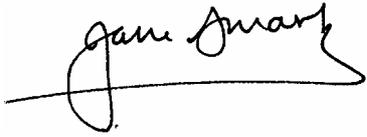
Mrs Sam Fanshawe, Director of Conservation
Marine Conservation Society



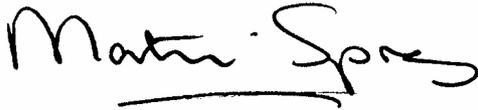
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Dr Jane Smart, Chief Executive
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Martin Spray, Acting Director General
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