



Letters to the Editor  
The Independent  
2 Derry Street  
London W8 5HF

14 September 2011

Sir,

Peter Marren's call for a "new focus on wildlife" (*Our wildlife needs a voice*, 14 September) raises a question about whether conservation groups are hamstrung in standing up for wildlife by also working with government. The answer is an emphatic 'no'.

More than ever the powerful, independent and collective voice of Wildlife and Countryside Link is needed. Every day our members, including those criticised by Peter, speak out about the collapse of nature in England and overseas and act to avoid and repair the damage.

To blame environment groups for the crisis in nature is like blaming cancer charities for not stopping cancer. In 2010 we warned about cuts to the environment department's budget and the emasculation of wildlife watchdogs. We did not befriend ministers for doing so.

Currently our members are being dismissed as 'vested interests' by Chancellor Osborne for raising legitimate concerns that his Government's planning 'reforms', cloaked in the language of sustainability, will make it harder for wildlife to recover.

A transformation in how government works for nature is central to whether wildlife starts being restored now or has to wait until the economy recovers. The role of the Environment Department in Whitehall is critical in this as the Treasury and other departments carry on as though their policies are coincidental to the crisis in nature rather than at its heart.

Government has adopted the right language but using the right words in the wrong order produces nonsense. That is why business-as-usual approaches to the economy and our environment will not restore nature and why Link and our members are at the forefront of saying this as we speak truth to power.

Yours faithfully,

Paul de Zylva  
Chair



Wildlife and Countryside Link  
89 Albert Embankment  
London  
SE1 7TP

T: 020 7820 8600  
F: 020 7820 8620  
E: [enquiry@wcl.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@wcl.org.uk)  
W: [www.wcl.org.uk](http://www.wcl.org.uk)

"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: Paul de Zylva, Director: Jodie Bettis

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