

13 May 2009

Dear Sir,

Farmers must choose to help wildlife

A decision has finally been made about how to address the environmental impacts of the loss of set-aside (Farmers not forced to help wildlife, 9 July). The government has backed the idea of an industry campaign that will encourage farmers to provide environmental measures on farms voluntarily.

Our organisations had strongly supported an alternative approach of linking farm subsidies to providing a small percentage of land for wildlife. This would have brought greater certainty for the environment, and would have ensured all farmers played a part in providing for wildlife as part of a shift to more environmentally friendly farming practices.

What matters now is that the industry campaign delivers results and soon. We will of course help where we can. We will also watch carefully to see that the targets the industry has agreed with the government are met, and if not to make sure that the mandatory fallback identified by the Secretary of State is activated.

Hilary Benn has placed considerable trust in industry leaders over this issue, and they must now ensure all their members play a part in making the campaign succeed.

Yours faithfully,

Dave Williams, Chairman - Badger Trust
Amy Coyte, Chief Executive – Bat Conservation Trust
Matt Shardlow, Director – Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
Ruth Chambers, Acting Chief Executive - Campaign for National Parks
Shaun Spiers, Chief Executive - Campaign to Protect Rural England
Mike Heyworth, Director - Council for British Archaeology
Andy Atkins, Executive Director - Friends of the Earth
Marina Pacheco, Chief Executive - The Mammal Society
Barbara Handley, Chairman – Hawk and Owl Trust
Kathy Wormold, Chief Executive - Froglife
Tony Gent, Chief Executive - Herpetological Conservation Trust
Victoria Chester, Chief Executive - Plantlife International
Jeremy Biggs, Director - Pond Conservation
Mark Avery, Director of Conservation – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Paul Knight, Chief Executive - Salmon & Trout Association
Stephanie Hilborne, Chief Executive - The Wildlife Trusts
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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"

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