

The Rt Hon John Prescott MP
Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
26 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2WH

05 July 2005

Dear Deputy Prime Minister

Climate Change – The urgent need for a clear statement of Planning Policy

There is a wide ranging scientific consensus that our climate is changing rapidly and that these changes will intensify, with potentially catastrophic implications for people and ecosystems. While the science is well understood and the actual changes already apparent, there is a significant gap in the perception of the general public and policy makers as to the urgency required to address this crisis. Action is required now, and on an unprecedented scale, to deal with the climate change challenge.

Spatial planning has a major and positive contribution to make, both in promoting lifestyles that reduce emissions and in facilitating a countryside that is resilient to the effects of climate change. However, we believe it is currently missing a major opportunity and is failing to deliver because regional and local planners still perceive the issue to be outside their remit. For example, preparatory work on Regional Spatial Strategies suggests that although there is some attention being paid to minimising length of journeys to work and locating development close to various modes of transport, the overall result of the growth strategies and infrastructure development will be further significant increases in emissions. In part this is because of the pressures generated by the Communities Plan, the implementation of which should better seek to reduce emissions.

The urgent need for an overarching policy statement

Government has sought to address climate change through a number of policy initiatives. In planning, tackling climate change is identified as a priority in PPS 1 with further reference in PPS 7, draft PPS 9, PPS 22 and, we hope, the forthcoming PPS 25. In all these documents, climate change is dealt with in the same way as other policy objectives and without adequate urgency. We need:

- A single comprehensive statement on climate change which communicates the vital significance of this issue to land use-decision makers.
- Recognition that climate change is one of the most important considerations for the planning system. It needs to inform not only the general approach set out in regional and local policy through statutory plans, but also individual development control decisions.
- Stronger emphasis on the contribution that planning decisions can make to avoidance, adaptation and reduction. Spatial policy must ensure that proper adaptation measures are taken, and a much greater priority must be given to

the avoidance of further climate change beyond that already inevitable, by making carbon neutral strategies and decisions.

- A scale change in thinking with regards to the role of planning in building a resilient countryside that allows wildlife to adapt to inevitable change.

Wildlife and Countryside Link, a coalition of 36 leading environmental organisations, believes urgent action is required now to refocus the new planning framework to deal comprehensively with climate change. We believe the most effective form such action could take would be a joint initiative from both ODPM and Defra to deliver effective policy and communicate that policy forcefully to regional and local decision makers.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our thoughts and concerns with you in further detail, and to hear about the Government's plans for dealing with this crucial issue. If you feel such a meeting would be useful, please ask your office to contact Helen Meech at Wildlife and Countryside Link on 020 7820 8600 or helen.meech@wcl.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Chief Executives of Environmental NGOs

Cc: Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP - Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Elliot Morley MP - Minister of State (Climate Change and Environment)



Amy Coyte, Chief Executive
Bat Conservation Trust



Matt Shardlow, Conservation Director
Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust



Martin Warren, Chief Executive
Butterfly Conservation

Handwritten signature of Mike Heyworth in black ink, featuring a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Mike Heyworth, Chief Executive
Council for British Archaeology

Handwritten signature of Kathy Moore in black ink.

Kathy Moore, Chief Executive
Council for National Parks

Handwritten signature of Shaun Spiers in black ink.

Shaun Spiers, Chief Executive
CPRE - Campaign to Protect Rural England

Handwritten signature of Tony Juniper in black ink.

Tony Juniper, Chief Executive
Friends of the Earth

Handwritten signature of Tony Gent in black ink.

Tony Gent, Chief Executive
Herpetological Conservation Trust

Handwritten signature of Elaine King in black ink, set against a light grey rectangular background.

Elaine King, Chief Executive
National Federation of Badger Groups



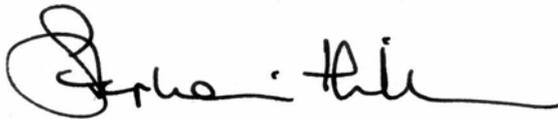
Tony Burton, Director of Policy and Strategy
National Trust



Nick Barrett, Chief Executive
Ramblers' Association



Graham Wynne, Chief Executive
RSPB



Stephanie Hilborne, Chief Executive
The Wildlife Trusts



Sue Holden, Chief Executive
Woodland Trust