

Link letter to The Times on ES funding following Defra announcement (unpublished)

Sir,

We warmly welcome the announcement by David Miliband, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, of the increase in funding for Environmental Stewardship. This will go a long way to supporting the objectives of the Government's environmentally friendly farming scheme.

Green farming schemes have made sound progress since their introduction. They have the potential to transform the environmental quality of the countryside, but the 2005 EU budget deal has starved them of funds. We hope that Defra will now commit a substantial amount of these new funds to meet the demand from farmers to enter the most environmentally beneficial schemes, as well as securing the hard-won gains from previous agreements.

Without adequate levels of funding, a great opportunity to secure environmental gains, including any need to address the effects of climate change, will be missed and farmers who are keen to join environmental schemes will be frustrated. The effectiveness of these schemes will wane and the richness and distinctiveness of our countryside will suffer harm as a result.

We urge the Government not to allow this to happen. It should continue to work to ensure that green farming schemes have the European and national funding needed to deliver their wide-ranging environmental public benefits.

Yours,

Arlin Rickard, Director, Association of Rivers Trusts  
Dr Richard Yarnell, Chief Executive, Badger Trust  
Amy Coyte, Chief Executive, The Bat Conservation Trust  
Matt Shardlow, Director, Buglife – the Invertebrate Conservation Trust  
Dr Martin Warren, Chief Executive, Butterfly Conservation  
Shaun Spiers, Chief Executive, Campaign to Protect Rural England  
Dr Mike Heyworth, Chief Executive, Council for British Archaeology  
Callum Rankine, Chief Executive, The Mammal Society  
Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary, Open Spaces Society  
Victoria Chester, Chief Executive, Plantlife International  
Graham Wynne, Chief Executive, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
Stephanie Hilborne, Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trusts  
Sue Holden, Chief Executive, The Woodland Trust