

## Media release

# Environmental charities challenge Government on economic decisions

Welcoming the [Government's response](#) to the Natural Capital Committee's Third Report, environmental organisations challenged the Government to correct chronic under-valuation of nature in decision-making by implementing the Committee's recommendations and strengthening the Committee.

Wildlife and Countryside Link applauded the Committee's work highlighting the urgent economic need to turn round declines in the natural environment. It said the Government's response was a step forward, but economic and social opportunities will continue to be missed unless the value of nature is taken into account across Government.

The Natural Capital Committee is expected to be re-established soon, and should be given:

- **New independence:** to assess environmental impact of policy and progress restoring nature
- **New authority:** to make recommendations for business and government
- **New resources:** to properly assess how nature and economy can be enhanced together

Environmental groups also welcomed the manifesto commitment to a 25 year strategy to restore nature, saying a stronger Natural Capital Committee could be vital to its success.

### **Steve Trotter, Director for England at The Wildlife Trusts, said:**

"We call on Government to develop the NCC's pioneering approach, recognising the natural value of ecosystems, by fully implementing the Committee's recommendations. We need a new approach to government expenditure and thinking, prioritising the natural world and investing in the nation's natural capital - our soils, rivers, peatlands, and forests. This will bring huge benefits to society, a healthy economy and efficiencies in public spending."

### **Martin Harper, Director of Conservation at the RSPB, said:**

"Reinforcing the bold manifesto commitment to restore nature in 25 years, DEFRA Minister Rory Stewart MP recently told the RSPB he wanted to lead the world in environmental protection; today's response to the Natural Capital Committee is a step forward, but we are calling for a step-change when the new Committee is established, so that better decisions can be made across Government for people, economy and nature".

### **Karen Ellis, Chief Economics and Development Advisor at WWF, said:**

"We are expecting a new mandate for the NCC in the weeks to come. We hope Government will recognise the economic and environmental opportunity by setting up a committee with the independence, authority and resources needed to make sure that better decisions are made in every Government Department – ones which recognise the value of nature in delivering against many policy objectives from health benefits to flood risk management".

### **Martin Spray, Chief Executive of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, said:**

"If it gets this right, the Government has a chance to improve economic decisions by valuing our natural wealth and reclaim the UK's place as a world-leader in environmental protection and economic insight; we are challenging Government to create a Committee that will hold business and public authorities to account and help restore nature for the next generation."

**Peter Nixon, Director of Land, Landscape and Nature at the National Trust, said:**

“We welcome today’s response and now look forward to working closely with the Government and other interested parties in developing a clear pathway to securing our natural environment for future generations. We and others can help make the recommendations of the Natural Capital Committee a reality.”

**Beccy Speight, CEO of the Woodland Trust, said:**

“The NCC’s third report gives Government the ammunition to ensure a healthy environment underpins our future prosperity, presenting a formidable economic case for more woodland in the UK. Given that annual tree planting is barely half the Government’s own ambition and applications to build on irreplaceable ancient woodland are being submitted daily, we urge Government to bring the natural environment to the fore in decision making to cement its commitment to a 25 year plan for the benefit of all.”

**Elaine King, Director of Wildlife and Countryside Link, said:**

“Wildlife and Countryside Link members have welcomed the ambition of a 25 year strategy to restore nature and written to the Government calling for a strong plan, with clear objectives and accountability. Setting up an authoritative, independent Natural Capital Committee could be key to success.”

Conservation organisations involved in the Wildlife and Countryside Link are: RSPB, Woodland Trust, National Trust, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, WWF, John Muir Trust, The Wildlife Trusts, Born Free Foundation, Plantlife, ClientEarth, CPRE, CNP, Bat Conservation Trust and Marine Conservation Society.

**Ends**

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**Notes to Editors:**

- The Natural Capital Committee’s Third [State of Natural Capital](#) Report was published on 27 January 2015.
- The NCC was established in 2012 to provide expert, independent advice to Government on the state of England’s natural capital. Its work ended with the Third Report.
- The Conservative Manifesto committed to continuing the work of the Natural Capital Committee for the duration of the new Parliament.
- The Conservative Manifesto also committed to a 25 year plan to restore biodiversity.
- Wildlife and Countryside Link [wrote to DEFRA](#) in August setting out the essential components of a 25 year plan to restore nature, including a stronger Natural Capital Committee.

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is a charity which brings together 46 voluntary organisations concerned with the conservation and protection of wildlife and the countryside. Our members practise and advocate environmentally sensitive land management, and encourage respect for and enjoyment of natural landscapes and features, the historic and marine environment and biodiversity. Taken together our members have the support of over 8 million people in the UK and manage over 750,000 hectares of land.