



**NATURAL SELECTION**  
- making the natural choices



Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future



# FOREWORD

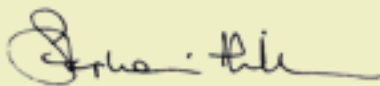
Never have the links between the environment, our health and our security been clearer. The current degree of consensus on climate change would have been unthinkable a decade ago. We appreciate the role green space plays in generating vibrant communities as never before. And few people now regard a healthy local environment as a luxury – we see it as integral to what makes our towns and cities worth living in.

As Chief Executive of The Wildlife Trusts, I have been encouraged by the many positive changes for the UK's environment in the last four years. However, the challenge ahead remains immense. Populations of threatened species are still declining, nationally protected sites continue to be lost to new development, and the demands we place on our seas risk destroying entire food chains. Despite the starkest warnings yet from scientists about climate change, most new buildings still don't incorporate energy saving technology.

Five years into the new Millennium, the need for strong political leadership on the environment has never been greater. As a nation, the action we take now will affect much more than our own natural heritage. It will have a profound effect on the future well-being of communities throughout the world.

This manifesto outlines an ambitious set of proposals for a challenging time. Based around six themes that the Wildlife Trusts believe are of particular importance, it calls for changes in the way we value, manage and behave towards the environment.

I hope you find this manifesto useful and informative. Above all, I hope it inspires you to action. If you would like to lend your support to The Wildlife Trusts' campaign, please see page 10.



Stephanie Hilborne  
Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trusts

# INTRODUCTION

The Wildlife Trusts believe that looking after our natural environment has never been more important than it is today.

Climate change is threatening wildlife on a global scale and forces us to rethink the way we live our lives.

We can no longer turn a blind eye to the losses and damage inflicted on our wildlife and wild places through development and land use change. For example, we are abstracting more water than our rivers can stand and harming wildlife as a result. We must halt and reverse these alarming declines in our wildlife and build a more resilient landscape that is able to meet the challenges of an uncertain future.

We must stop viewing a high quality natural environment as a luxury. We must recognise the economic and social benefits it brings, including tourism, recreation opportunities, flood defence, and mental and physical health. The mainstream political agenda relies on a high quality environment.

It can be done. At the last general election The Wildlife Trusts presented a series of challenges: many of these have been met - wholly or in part - over the past four years.

The public understands what is needed – at least seven million people are members of environmental organisations. They appreciate the importance of a healthy environment and want to make a difference.

The next Government must respond to this concern, rise to the challenge, and place the environment at the very heart of its policies.

## **A key test:**

There must be strong statutory agencies responsible for the environment that have the voice, resources, independence and powers both to advise Government on the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and to take action themselves.





# THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE

## Climate change is the single greatest environmental challenge of our time.

By 2050, a quarter of all plant and animal species could be extinct as a result. The implications for the UK are potentially huge, threatening homes, landscapes, security, and jobs. But it will be the poorest people in the world who suffer the most.

The Wildlife Trusts welcome the UK Government's lead on this crucial issue, but far bolder steps are needed. The new Government must re-commit to the target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions to 20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2010 (60 per cent below by 2050).

## What is needed

- Tough targets for industrial and transport emissions of carbon dioxide, including through the EU Emissions Trading Scheme.
- Greater support for energy conservation initiatives and appropriate renewable energy developments.
- Tax reform to encourage change in our behaviour towards the environment.

## What a new Government should do

- Commit to demand management of car travel and aviation and take the lead on international action to cut greenhouse gas emissions from air travel.
- Legislate for more energy-efficient homes and businesses, ensuring that all new homes are built to the ecohomes' "very good" standard and developing and implementing a water efficiency ecolabelling scheme for all domestic appliances.
- Introduce further tax incentives to encourage the widespread use of energy saving materials and appliances.
- Support research and development of new green technologies to assist energy saving and sustainable energy generation.

# SAVE THE SEAS

**As an island nation, our lives are intricately bound up with the sea that surrounds us.**

**The sea provides** food and resources, a means of transport, and a place for recreation and enjoyment – supporting jobs and prosperity. What is more, half our biodiversity lives in the seas.

But our marine environment cannot sustain this level of activity without better management, co-ordination and control. We need to revitalise our fisheries: two thirds of our commercial fish stocks are in decline. We must stop pollution and waste that threaten to disrupt the oceans' natural balance and productivity. We must act now to give wildlife a chance to recover.



## **What is needed**

- New arrangements for the governance of the sea, effective across the UK.
- More investment in the protection of marine wildlife.
- A spatial planning framework to ensure the different demands on our seas are met in an orderly and sustainable way.
- Improved management of our inshore fisheries to maintain the fish stocks that wildlife, and jobs, rely on.

## **What a new Government should do**

- Introduce a package of legislation and policy measures to protect the marine environment, including the promised Marine Bill, at the earliest opportunity and encourage similar arrangements across the UK administrations for devolved issues.
  - Designate a network of protected areas, including no-take-zones, covering up to 30 per cent of the UK's waters.
  - Establish a marine authority with the money and power to oversee regulation and planning at sea.
- Ensure that high quality advice is available on the marine environment and its conservation from expert and independent agencies with adequate resources.



# HEALTHY PEOPLE - HEALTHY PLACES

**Millions of pounds are spent each year treating obesity and stress-related illness.**

Local communities suffer because there is nowhere safe for people to meet informally and share in activities together. A poor quality, unsafe, or inaccessible local environment often seriously reduces people's quality of life.

The answer is to provide healthy local environments that are cared for, well used, and rich in nature and wildlife. Well-managed greenspaces are safe places. They bring communities together, and provide opportunities for healthy exercise, relaxation and fun. They provide cost effective ways to tackle mental ill-health, obesity and promote social inclusion.

## **What is needed**

- Everyone to have easy access to well-managed natural greenspace.
- Every publicly funded new development to incorporate accessible greenspace, including significant natural features.
- Outdoor exercise and environmental volunteering formally recognised as treatments for stress, depression and obesity.

## **What a new Government should do**

- Require all planning authorities to provide good quality, accessible natural greenspace within 300m of everyone's home, and regular programmes of safe, formal and informal outdoor activities.
- Require all significant, newly built developments to adhere to minimum standards (of both quantity and quality) for the provision and management of accessible natural greenspace.
- Require NHS Health Boards to champion the provision of natural exercise and environmental volunteering as part of the suite of options available to GPs for the treatment of depression, stress and obesity-related illnesses.



# OPEN AIR - OPEN MIND

**The outdoors gives young people space to express themselves and learn in a way that is simply not possible within the constraints of a formal classroom.**

Outdoor learning in a natural setting can significantly increase educational attainment across a range of curriculum areas. It can effectively engage otherwise disaffected or under-performing young people, and can be used to develop key skills such as teamwork, problem solving and communication, and to encourage good citizenship.

Despite this, school grounds often lack natural interest and are poorly used and outdoor recreation is under-resourced. Only if young people have regular access to nature can they benefit from everything that it has to offer for their personal, social and educational development – whatever their age or personal circumstances. Properly resourced and supported programmes of outdoor learning can assist significantly in producing the skilled, knowledgeable, self-confident and productive citizens of tomorrow.

## **What is needed**

- Every child to have access to wild greenspace where they can enjoy safe yet challenging and positive play experiences on a daily basis.
- The outside environment to be used as a valued resource for teaching across the curriculum and at all levels, including organised educational trips to a natural outdoor destination for every child, every year.
- More and better opportunities for students to undertake environmental vocational skills training

## **What a new Government should do**

- Incorporate a requirement to use the outside environment in teaching across the curriculum, and introduce monitoring of such experiences as part of formal school inspections.
- Remove the barriers that prevent more – and more effective – use of outdoor trips by schools, particularly those relating to the health and safety concerns of teachers.
- Provide additional resources for the development and use of school grounds as an educational resource to deliver cross-curricular outdoor education.
- Provide additional resources to support the delivery of environmental learning, including vocational training





# DEVELOPING NATURALLY

## Everyone wants a decent home, a job, and a good quality of life.

But the drive for regeneration and new housing is putting pressure on the whole country, and current levels of development are unsustainable in the long term. Whether the natural environment is a winner or a loser will depend on how we manage these demands. We must take care that when we create a better environment for ourselves we also make a better environment for wildlife, create new green spaces and improve our countryside.

It can be done. *Developing naturally* means developing our natural environment and our social and economic environment together. It means finding solutions that improve quality of life whilst avoiding the need for costly new roads or other developments that damage the environment. It means working with the natural environment to meet all our needs.

## What is needed

- Consideration of the natural environment at the earliest stages of all plans for regeneration and development.
- Increased respect for natural processes so that development is based on a proper understanding of events, such as flooding and sea-level rise, and the requirements of wild species and wildlife habitats.
- Reinforcement of the principle of environmental sustainability as central to planning and development.

## What a new Government should do

- Recognise the critical importance of green infrastructure to regeneration – and ensure the funding is in place to deliver it.
- Place a statutory duty on all public bodies to further the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Provide Planning Authorities with the resources they need to implement and monitor new and existing environmental policy.
- Issue strong guidance to local and regional authorities in England on making positive gains for wildlife through Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks – for example, through the recreation, restoration and linking of wildlife habitats.



# BRINGING NATURE BACK TO LIFE

The future of the UK's wildlife is on a knife-edge. While the rate of destruction experienced last century has slowed significantly, the wildlife areas that remain are often too small and isolated to survive in the long term. Climate change may push already stressed populations of rare species over the edge unless we conserve wildlife more effectively in larger areas.

Action for biodiversity simply cannot wait. Unless we act now, the Government will not meet the international target to halt biodiversity loss by 2010. We need policies that encourage us to take full account of biodiversity beyond its pure landscape or amenity value: for example, we know that restoring woodland in upland areas can save millions of pounds in flood alleviation, soil protection and water quality control.

## What is needed

- A more ambitious, long-term vision for bringing back our lost biodiversity.
- A more resilient countryside able to accommodate the pressures of modern living and future changes, especially predicted climate change.
- Larger areas of land set aside and managed for the benefit of wildlife and people.

## What a new Government should do

- Place a statutory duty on Regional Authorities to protect and enhance biodiversity, to include the use of Regional Spatial Strategies to promote biodiversity enhancement at a landscape level.
- Strengthen the protection of Local Wildlife Sites, or their equivalents, by ensuring all planning authorities have systems and policies for their selection and management, and by strengthening the planning process for these sites.
- Ensure that flood defence and coastal realignment are designed to maximise the benefits to wildlife
- Introduce policy and financial incentives to encourage landowners to identify and manage larger areas of land for wildlife conservation in the long term.





Please read this manifesto carefully.

It highlights six key areas of environmental policy all of which affect your constituency and local environment and which The Wildlife Trusts wish to see progressed after the General Election.

Improvements in the quality of your local environment will only happen if you act on this manifesto.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

If you are a local candidate:

- **Show that you care about our wild environment** by supporting the proposals in this manifesto. Discuss the issues with the media and in speeches and publications and, if you are elected, please take action. **You can make a difference.**
- **Contact your local Wildlife Trust** for briefings and examples relevant to your constituency – a Wildlife Trust will be active in your area responding to planning proposals, working with local communities or managing land for wildlife. **We can help you.**
- **You will be very welcome at your local Wildlife Trust headquarters.** The Director and staff will be happy to tell you more about their work in your area and to discuss what could be done for the local environment and its wildlife. **We know the local situation.**

If you are a wildlife supporter:

- **If candidates call at your home** or you can attend public meetings, take the opportunity to question them face-to-face about their views on the natural environment and, in particular, seek their support for the proposals in this manifesto. **You can make a difference.**
- **Send a letter** to your candidate and telephone, write or email your local radio, television or newspapers with your views about changes that will help the environment and, in particular, wildlife. **Your voice is important.**
- **Your local Wildlife Trust** will have further information about its concerns for your local environment and its wildlife. **We believe it matters.**



# FIND OUT MORE LOCALLY

The dates and venues for public meetings should be advertised in your local newspapers. To find out more about your local candidates, either contact local party constituency offices (details in your telephone directory) or visit the appropriate party web sites:

[www.conservatives.com](http://www.conservatives.com) • [www.labour.org.uk](http://www.labour.org.uk) • [www.libdems.org.uk](http://www.libdems.org.uk)  
[www.greenparty.org.uk](http://www.greenparty.org.uk) • [www.plaidcymru.org](http://www.plaidcymru.org) • [www.snp.org](http://www.snp.org)  
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The address and telephone number of your Wildlife Trust can be found in your local telephone directory or obtained from the national office at the address or telephone number on the back cover.



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[www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org](http://www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org)

In Scotland contact the  
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Kirk Cramond, Cramond Glebe Road,  
Edinburgh, EH4 6NS

Tel: 0131 312 7765

[www.swt.org.uk](http://www.swt.org.uk)

In Wales contact the  
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The Wildlife Trusts are a nationwide  
network of local wildlife charities working  
together to create a better future for  
wildlife and people. Together, The Wildlife  
Trusts manage 2500 nature reserves and  
have more than 560,000 members.

*RSWT Reg charity no 207238*

