

MEDIA RELEASE

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Embargoed: 00:01 Day 08 November 2011

Green groups challenge UK to stand firm on greener farming in Europe

**CAP reforms risk being little more than an exercise in 'green-washing'
unless UK takes a strong position with EU partners**

An influential group of over 25 wildlife and environmental organisations [1] have joined together to persuade the UK Government to take a firm negotiating position with the EU over strengthening environmental provisions in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Campaigners fear that unless the UK takes a strong line on making CAP payments, currently worth over £3 billion per year, do more towards maintaining and improving the natural environment and animal welfare, the current round of reforms will be little more than a 'green-wash' for the established status quo.

Abi Bunker, RSPB senior agriculture policy officer and Chair of Wildlife and Countryside Link's Agriculture Working Group, said: "The Commission's proposals are now out and we're deeply concerned that agri-environment schemes, which reward farmers to do fantastic things for the environment and wildlife on their land, will receive less money in the future.

"This flies in the face of claims that the next CAP will be greener. It is now time for the UK Government, and UK Members of the European Parliament to step up to the mark and make sure such schemes are properly resourced so our farmers get all the support they need to do their bit for nature."

The Joint Links group are launching a new report, '*Crunch Time for CAP: Choosing the right tools for a richer countryside*', at an event in the House of Commons at 4pm on 8 November 2011. The Rt. Hon Jim Paice MP, Minister

for Agriculture and Food will be speaking at the launch to give the Government's response. The report outlines 10 key outcomes that the Joint Link's think the UK Government should make the basis of its negotiating position with EU partners.

Ian Woodhurst, Senior Farming Campaigner for CPRE and Vice Chair of Wildlife and Countryside Link's Agriculture Working Group, says: "The CAP has huge potential to bring about a revolution in the protection and enrichment of Europe's landscapes. But to make this happen we will need our government to show the political will and a strong commitment to arguing the case in Brussels. Anything less will mean more of the same, poorly directed funding delivering few real benefits for the environment."

Notes to Editors

[1]The Joint Links group consists of [Wildlife and Countryside Link](#), [Scottish Environment LINK](#), [Northern Ireland Environment Link](#) and [Wales Environment Link](#).

[2]

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) brings together over 30 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 690,000 hectares of land.

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment organisations. Its 36 member bodies represent a wide range of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

Wales Environment Link is the umbrella body for environmental and countryside non-governmental organisations in Wales. We are a busy network, active in a range of policy areas and the official link between the Welsh Government and Wales' environmental NGO sector.

Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) is the forum and networking body for organisations interested in the environment of Northern Ireland. NIEL acts to coordinate a strong and coherent voice to policy makers to improve environmental policy and action.

Crunch Time for CAP is supported by the following Joint Links' members:

- Archaeology Scotland
- Butterfly Conservation
- Bat Conservation Trust

- British Mountaineering Council
- Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Campaign for National Parks
- Council for British Archaeology
- Froglife
- The Grasslands Trust
- The Mammal Society
- North East Mountain Trust
- Plantlife
- Ramblers Scotland
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- Scottish Campaign for National Parks
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
- The Wildlife Trusts
- Wildlife Trust Wales
- Woodland Trust
- Wye & Usk Foundation
- Youth Hostel Association