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## WWF-UK proposals for the 2015 General Election manifestos

The next UK Government will face pressing environmental challenges, but also real opportunities to protect and restore the international environment, grow our economy sustainably and enhance the quality of life of people both here and overseas. WWF-UK believes that, in order to realise those opportunities fully, the next Government must ensure that all Whitehall departments exercise their powers in such a way as to promote sustainable development and deliver for future generations.

### 1. A sustainable future for the world's forests and wildlife

Many iconic wildlife species face an uncertain future, while the world's great forests – irreplaceable reservoirs of biodiversity and regulators of our global climate – are disappearing at an alarming rate. The UK has a strong record of leadership on international action for wildlife and habitats, and the next Government must build on this by:

- working with other EU member states to close the loopholes in the Timber Regulation when it is reviewed in 2015 so that it covers all timber and timber products;
- introducing its own Bill to ensure that all timber sold in the UK is both legally felled and sustainably grown, thereby making the UK an international exemplar in protecting the world's forests;
- maintaining international leadership in action against wildlife crime and the illegal wildlife trade; and
- matching its strong record on international wildlife crime with firm action at home through a commitment to long-term funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

### 2. Building a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and reaffirming the UK's commitments on climate change

It is not too late to avert the worst impacts of dangerous climate change, if we act now. The UK led the world, and provided an international example to follow, in passing the first Climate Change Act with cross-party support. We now have a critical role to play in delivering meaningful agreements on climate action in Europe and internationally.

We are also a leader in the development of new low carbon technologies like offshore wind, wave and tidal power, carbon capture and storage and electric cars. Developing our leadership in these areas could open the way for significant UK economic growth, while also accelerating cost reductions in these technologies. And we need to build on the growing recognition of the importance of natural capital to long-term economic security.

The next UK Government must put in place the building blocks of a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and reaffirm its commitment to ambitious greenhouse gas emission reductions by:

On UK climate change action:

- unequivocally committing to the greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets set out in the Committee on Climate Change's (CCC) carbon budgets, which mean a 34% fall in emissions from 1990 levels by 2020, and a 60% cut by 2030;
- taking firm, positive action to decarbonise the economy including, in 2016, setting the Fifth Carbon Budget in line with CCC advice; setting a carbon intensity target for the electricity sector in 2030 of 50-100g CO<sub>2</sub>/kWh; and formally including the UK's share of international aviation and shipping emissions in the carbon budgets;
- setting out an ambitious plan to roll out energy efficiency through a home retrofit programme on a street by street basis and adjustments to stamp duty and council tax to encourage uptake of the green deal;
- championing the UK's renewable energy industry and accelerating the reduction in the costs of these technologies by creating the conditions for long-term, sustainable investment in a supply chain for the offshore wind sector, and encouraging community ownership of renewable energy including wind and solar farms and domestic microgeneration; and
- taking a firm position against major UK airport expansion, which is not consistent with achieving our climate targets.

On the European and international stage:

- giving a lead through championing a strong EU climate and energy package consisting of an emissions reduction target of at least 50% by 2030, together with strong support for the ambitious deployment of renewable energy and energy efficiency infrastructure; and
- working to secure ambitious deals on both the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals and a global climate deal at the 2015 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Summit, as well as adopting global market-based mechanisms for international aviation and shipping.

To build a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy:

- developing a coherent, national plan for a new economy, setting out clear long-term targets and measures to ensure that government and the public and private sectors understand and account for their use of and impacts on natural capital;
- strengthening the Green Investment Bank, including by giving it full borrowing powers, so that it can provide strong support to the growth of the businesses and industries that will power the new economy;
- creating an Office of Environmental Responsibility (OER), at arm's length from government, with a duty to provide impartial advice to Ministers on the long-

term implications of their decisions for the environment, both nationally and internationally;

- continuing to support and provide long-term funding for the Natural Capital Committee, whose expertise will be critical to policy-making that maintains and enhances natural capital;
- placing a duty on all government departments, to be overseen by the OER, when exercising their powers to do so in pursuance of sustainable development;
- ensuring companies are held accountable for their actions through strengthening the London Stock Exchange listing rules relating to environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) issues, and requiring companies to be fully transparent on ESG risks within their financial statements; and
- leading on the ambition to make London the clean energy finance centre of the world.

### 3. Working for healthy UK seas and rivers

We know what needs to be done to protect the UK's marine wildlife and habitats and ensure a healthy freshwater environment. We simply need to give safeguarding these places the priority it deserves, and the next UK Government must do this by:

- creating a well-managed and ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas that protect the full range of habitats and species found in UK seas and allow for the recovery and restoration of those that are in poor condition;
- implementing the positive reforms of the Common Fisheries Policy and, alongside the industry and stakeholders, developing a national vision for thriving UK fishing businesses, communities and fish stocks. This should outline clear timelines for the achievement of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable fisheries with collaborative governance at the heart of the process;
- implementing and enforcing the EU regulation on illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing by ensuring we block entry of illegally caught fish into the UK and export the practice of sustainable fisheries management across the world;
- legislating for comprehensive reform of water abstraction licensing by 2016, so that the regime is placed on a sustainable footing, with all unsustainable licences revoked;
- implementing a strategy to deliver fair, sustainable and affordable water charging which would see at least 80% of households on a meter by 2020, with tariffs to support households on low incomes and to encourage efficient water use. This should include legislating to allow water companies in all parts of England and Wales to move to compulsory metering if this is the most beneficial option for customers and the environment; and
- setting out plans to restore the three quarters of English rivers that are not in good ecological health and protect our unique and iconic chalk streams.

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