



Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

43 Southgate Street, Winchester, Hampshire. SO23 9EH

Tel: +44 (0) 1962 868626 Fax: +44 (0) 1962 868625

E-mail: enquiries@ieem.net

Web: www.ieem.net

Patrons:

Professor Charles Gimingham

Mr John Humphrys

The Earl of Selborne

Professor David Goode

Mr Chris Packham

Baroness Barbara Young

The Rt Hon Caroline Spelman, MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

6 August 2010

Dear Secretary of State,

Impact of proposed public spending cuts on Government's commitment to enhancing the natural environment

As President of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) I am fortunate to spend time amongst some of the UK's most professional and experienced ecologists and environmental managers. For almost 20 years, IEEM has played a leading role in promoting high standards of advice and practice amongst our profession. Most recently we have welcomed the Government's publication of a discussion document 'An invitation to shape the Nature of England' with its aspiration to put the value of our natural environment at the heart of Government policy making.

It is against this background that I wish to draw your attention to the serious risk posed to the Government's ambition for enhanced environmental protection. Whilst recognising the urgent need to ensure economic recovery, the proposed scale of job losses in the two leading statutory agencies charged with protecting our environment, Natural England and the Environment Agency, undermines our profession's capacity to deliver the evidence-based advice and guidance on which Government policy must be based. Furthermore the potential loss of ecologist posts from local authorities will hinder the involvement of, and advice to, local communities and NGOs in environmental action as part of the Big Society initiative. My own experience as a past member of the Countryside Council for Wales leaves me with very grave doubts that major aspects of our statutory legislature with respect to environmental protection and conservation can be delivered with the scale of cuts proposed.

I do hope that you are able to consider the points I have made in the context of IEEM's wholehearted support for recognising and embedding the true value of our natural resources in local and national decision-making. I would be happy to expand further on these issues if it is helpful to you or your colleagues within DEFRA.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Steve Ormerod FIEEM
President, IEEM

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