

The Rt Hon. Boris Johnson MP
10 Downing Street
London
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Dear Prime Minister

27 October 2021

Donors call for greater commitments for locally-led nature conservation to reverse biodiversity loss, mitigate climate change, and increase human wellbeing

Restoring our relationship with the natural world is critical for humanity's future. The climate and nature crises that we have caused cannot be considered in isolation, nor solved independently. Biodiverse environments provide climate resilience. A stable climate enables ecosystems to support millions of species, including us. At COP26, as world leaders agree targets to tackle climate change, we must not lose sight of the biodiversity crisis. Resilient people need resilient nature: diverse ecosystems, healthy habitats and buoyant populations of wild species will also sustain human life and livelihoods with countless services, from breathable air to green jobs.

While the scale of the challenge is global, some of the most impactful, sustainable and equitable solutions are local. Every community, wherever it is in the world, is uniquely and inextricably linked to the landscape, plants and other animals alongside which it exists. Communities with local understanding, local knowledge and local stakes are well placed to transform political aims into positive action benefitting nature, and helping people adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Yet only 3% of global climate finance is spent on nature-based solutions, and support for grassroots biodiversity initiatives is just a fraction of that.

We the undersigned are donors to and supporters of grassroots conservation leaders around the world: we know that small targeted support often offers the best long-term impact. By funding priority initiatives we are enabling communities and NGOs to conserve their species, and protect and restore their ecosystems, particularly in regions worst-hit by the climate emergency, where biodiversity loss is already proving catastrophic. Together, we have granted in excess of £196 million to more than 11,600 projects in over 160 countries: these solutions have saved species from extinction, reversed deforestation, protected vast areas of priority habitat, as well as sequestered carbon, and serviced society through food security, clean air, fresh water, green jobs, sustainable livelihoods, and cultural and mental wellbeing.

There is an urgent need to close the biodiversity finance gap for long term investment in nature and people. We need to mobilise significantly greater funds from the public sector, private sector and philanthropists with greater efficiency and effectiveness so that this grassroots action can add up to seismic change globally. Finance directed to innovative, inspiring and locally-led projects can be administered quickly and utilized nimbly, directly addressing community priorities and often leading to rapid conservation returns.

The solutions exist. The evidence is in. Grassroots conservation works. Our message to COP26 is simple: We need world leaders to invest significant funds relative to the scale of the climate and biodiversity crises we face. Funding channeled to projects addressing climate threats on the ground will help ensure that the future of life on earth is in safe hands.

Yours sincerely

Conservation Leadership Programme
The Rufford Foundation
Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund
Whitley Fund for Nature
People's Trust for Endangered Species
On the EDGE Conservation
Chester Zoo
Wildlife Conservation Network
Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation
Turtle Conservation Fund
Fauna & Flora International
Prince Bernhard Nature Fund
The International Institute for Environment and Development
Re:wild
Fondation Franklina

cc. Alok Sharma, President for COP26
António Guterres, UN Secretary-General
Elizabeth Truss, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

Please reply to Danni Parks, Director at Whitley Fund for Nature (danni@whitleyaward.org)