

The First Minister and deputy First Minister  
Northern Ireland Assembly  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX  
Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020



Dear First Minister and deputy First Minister,

**Re: A Resilient Economy, Healthy Communities and the Natural World**

We understand that the Covid19 response and ongoing negotiations regarding Brexit are immediate priorities for the Northern Ireland Executive. With this in mind, the Northern Ireland Executive has the opportunity to lead our long-term recovery by putting a resilient economy, healthy communities, and a thriving natural environment at the heart of the recovery effort. We, the undersigned, call on the Northern Ireland Executive to:

*Create A More Resilient Economy* – In partnership with stakeholders, develop and deliver the ‘green new deal’ commitment contained within the ‘New Decade New Approach’ agreement by investing in infrastructure, housing, technology and skills to generate new jobs that directly contribute to a sustainable future. Ensure that public and private finance meets a ‘net zero test’ and prioritise investment in low carbon infrastructure. We must now mainstream cycling, walking and sustainable public transport infrastructure to realise additional health, wellbeing and environmental benefits.

*Increase Space for Nature and People* - Place the health and wellbeing of people and nature at the heart of the recovery by increasing access to nature-rich green space for everyone. Enhanced access to, and improved provision of high-quality green space, is an essential pre-requisite for good health (physical and mental), wellbeing and prosperity. We must capitalise on these natural health benefits by introducing measures that will enable people and nature to flourish. For example, in planning for our children and young people returning to school, we ask that the multiple benefits of outdoor learning become an integral part of daily school life.

*Strengthen Nature’s Protections* – Improve the laws that ensure the natural world is protected not exploited by ensuring the swift passage of environmental legislation as we leave the EU Transition phase. Rapidly scale up the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of our environmental protections by delivering on the commitment to develop an Independent Environmental Protection Agency for Northern Ireland. We must also introduce targets in law for the restoration of nature (both on land and at sea) and incentivise sustainable approaches to food production, farming and fishing, underpinned by the Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland.

This public health crisis has shown us the power of the collective human spirit - the value of community, friendship, and hope. There will be difficult choices in the weeks and months ahead as the Northern Ireland Executive leads us out of this crisis. In doing so, we ask you to create something better and lead us to a new normal: a climate-safe, nature-rich, healthy world for all.



We would ask the Northern Ireland Executive to respond to our asks above and would welcome the opportunity to meet you to discuss - alongside Northern Ireland Executive colleagues and heads of agencies. In the meantime, we wish you all the best with the recovery efforts over the coming weeks and months.

Yours Sincerely

Action Renewables  
Belfast Food Co-op  
Belfast Food Network  
Brookeville Farms  
Business in the Community  
Chartered Institute for Environmental Health  
Chief Officers Third Sector  
Community Foundation for Northern Ireland  
Culmore Organic Farm  
East Belfast Enterprise  
Environmental Justice Network  
Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland  
Glasswater Farm  
Harvest Fayre  
Helen's Bay Organic  
Jubilee Farm  
Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful  
Mourne Heritage Trust  
National Trust Northern Ireland  
Nature Friendly Farming Network  
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action  
Northern Ireland Environment Link  
Northern Ireland Marine Task Force  
Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland  
RSA Food and Farming Commission  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Northern Ireland  
Royal Society of Ulster Architects  
Social Farms and Gardens Northern Ireland  
Something Fishy Northern Ireland  
Sustainable Northern Ireland  
Sustrans  
uHub  
Ulster Wildlife  
Woodland Trust Northern Ireland  
Youth Climate Association of Northern Ireland  
Dara McNulty, young nature writer and campaigner  
Doctor Amanda Slevin, Queen's University Belfast  
Doctor Gavan Rafferty, University of Ulster  
Professor Geraint Ellis, Queen's University Belfast  
James Dawson Stelfox MBE, architect  
Professor John Barry, Queen's University Belfast  
Simon Dougan MBE, Yellow Door

