

"Why, as the twenty-first century proceeds inexorably towards a world population of nine billion plus, is there so little discussion of the socially and environmentally damaging effects of continuing population growth?"

Professor Diana Coole

Too Many Bodies? The Return and Disavowal of the Population Question¹

Population

and the UK's environment and conservation organisations

Are they doing enough?

Over the past year, Robin Maynard² has been seeking to engage the UK's main environmental NGOs with the issue of the continuing growth in global human population and the consequent impacts upon the planet, its environment, ecosystems, other species – and of course, the well-being and sustainability of our own species.

A series of briefings³ were drafted setting out the key facts and statistics as to, 'Why Population Matters for' and sent with an accompanying letter to the Chief Executives of **CPRE**, **Friends of the Earth** and the **RSPB**. Although tailored to the declared interests and specific concerns of those 3 NGOs, the briefings and the issues are as relevant to all the environment and conservation NGOs and so were also sent to, **Greenpeace**; **National Trust**; **Royal Society**, **The Wildlife Trusts**; **Wildfowl and Wetland Trust**; **Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF)** – and additionally to the conservation umbrella body, **Wildlife Link**.

Toplines from those briefings:

- The UN's medium projection for the total human population is 9.6 billion by 2050 – (projections range from a low of 8 billion to a high of 11 billion)⁴
- Since 1970, global biodiversity has

declined overall by 30% (60% in the tropics)

- Over 220 million women, mainly in the poorest countries, lack access to the safe, affordable family planning they want⁵
- Of the world's 1.7 billion 'high-rate consumers', 50% now live in the developing world
- By choosing to have one less child, a US woman would reduce her family's carbon budget 20 times more than through all other 'environmentally-friendly' actions⁶
- 80% of people in the UK think our population is too high; 84% think the world population is too high.⁷

For the past four decades, the NGOs have chosen to focus on the issue of consumption to the exclusion of the population factor – yet consumption continues to increase in the developed world despite over four decades of campaigning by groups like Friends of the Earth seeking to persuade people to consider and curb their global footprint.



Why is population a priority?

Two recent reports, the Royal Society's 'People and the planet'⁸ and the 'Living Planet Report 2012'⁹, produced by the Global Footprint Network and WWF International, highlight the need to include human population growth as a key factor impacting upon our planet and its sustainability for our and all species on Earth as well as consumption.

"With the world already in ecological overshoot, continued growth in population and person footprint is clearly not a sustainable path"

Living Planet Report 2012

"Population and the environment should not be considered as two separate issues."

People and the planet, Royal Society 2012

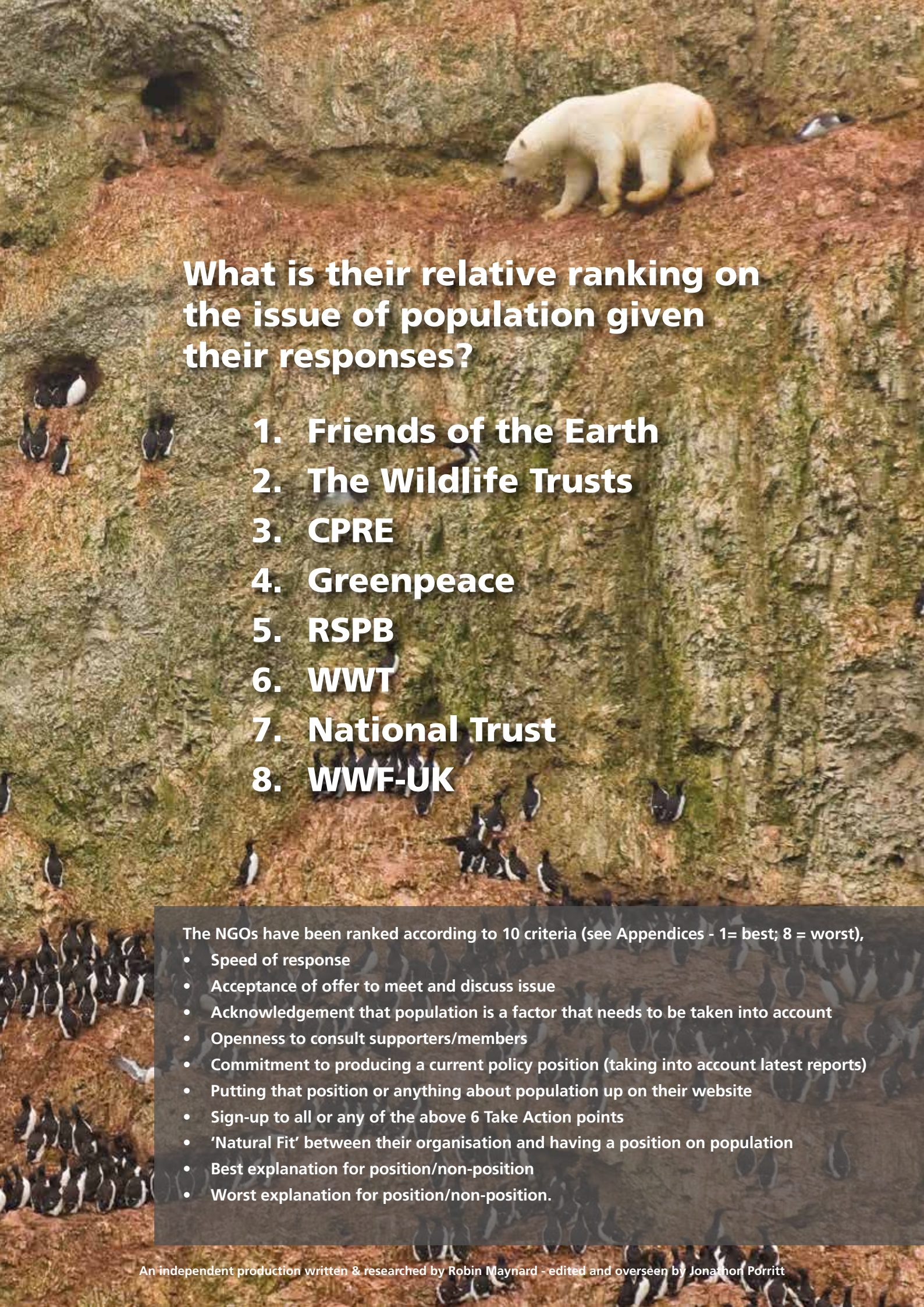
Those two reports provided the rationale for approaching the NGOs and asking them to engage more actively and publicly with the issue of human population growth and its impacts upon their areas of concern.



The NGOs were asked to commit to the following actions:

- **Accept and promote** the findings of the Royal Society's People and the planet report that population and consumption must be considered as indivisible, linked issues
- **Acknowledge publicly and actively communicate** the crucial relevance of population to your organisation's mission and objectives
- **Support and advocate** the principle of universal access to safe, affordable family planning for all women throughout the world
- **Call on the Government** to act on the findings of the Royal Society's report and draw-up a national population policy
- **Use your organisation's considerable policy resources, voice and influence** to speak out and engage members and the wider public in an intelligent, informed and honest debate about the population issue
- **Include the population factor** in all relevant communications and policy pronouncements – i.e. taking into account all the factors that impact on the planet and its ecosystems: Population (overall human numbers); Affluence (amount each of us consumes); Technology (available technology and efficiency of that technology in providing the goods and services derived from the planet's resources).

As per the equation formulated by Paul Ehrlich and John Holdren, $\text{Impact} = P \times A \times T^{10}$.



What is their relative ranking on the issue of population given their responses?

- 1. Friends of the Earth**
- 2. The Wildlife Trusts**
- 3. CPRE**
- 4. Greenpeace**
- 5. RSPB**
- 6. WWT**
- 7. National Trust**
- 8. WWF-UK**

The NGOs have been ranked according to 10 criteria (see Appendices - 1= best; 8 = worst),

- Speed of response
- Acceptance of offer to meet and discuss issue
- Acknowledgement that population is a factor that needs to be taken into account
- Openness to consult supporters/members
- Commitment to producing a current policy position (taking into account latest reports)
- Putting that position or anything about population up on their website
- Sign-up to all or any of the above 6 Take Action points
- 'Natural Fit' between their organisation and having a position on population
- Best explanation for position/non-position
- Worst explanation for position/non-position.

Friends of the Earth (FOE) responded that the organisation had already initiated, *"a process of revisiting our position on population... in January 2012"*, and provided Robin Maynard with a copy of that review paper, which did acknowledge that, *"The simplified argument that "consumption is more important than population" needs therefore to be substantially qualified..."*



But then came to the conclusion that, *"... the die for the 21st century population has already been cast – so in that light clamouring for billions reductions or indeed substantial increases, are just so many Canute-like protestations against the tide coming in..., or going out..."*

And concluded with the somewhat defeatist statement that population growth is, *"...a powerful component substantially beyond our policy and campaigning reach."*

Following on from that internal review paper (plus proddings from several FOE local groups responding positively to the 'Why Population Matters for Friends of the Earth' briefing sent to them independently by RM), Mike Childs, FOE's Head of Policy, Research and Science, drafted a new position paper. Recognising the interest amongst their supporters in the issues, Friends of the Earth took the welcome initiative of putting that paper up for discussion and open debate at the FOE Local Groups gathering of 12 – 14 July 2013.

That new draft showed some significant shifts in positioning on previous iterations – i.e. no longer fatalistically accepting that *"the die is cast"* on future population growth and acknowledging the Royal Society's assertion that both population and consumption have to be addressed, *"Demographic projections are not the same as destiny; nor are consumption projections."*

Governments need to actively engage in both areas; they need to bring consumption in line with planetary limits and redistribute consumption to ensure all people can achieve well-being; and they need to provide the rights and services to women and girls to enable a global peak and decline in global population before or around 2050 (It is not morally acceptable to use coercion, including economic coercion to achieve reductions in fertility.)"

Following the discussion and debate at FOE's local group gathering in July 2013, a final

draft of the policy paper was produced and published on FOE's website on 1st August 2013 titled, 'Global population, consumption and rights'.¹¹

FOE's position still remains heavily focused on consumption patterns, despite the evidence of the lack of progress on controlling consumption on its own:

In 1997, Friends of the Earth published 'Tomorrow's World – Britain's Share in a Sustainable Future' setting targets for reducing various environmental negatives and consumption trends. Over the intervening 16 years, all those consumption targets have been breached whilst the UK's population has increased by over 4 million people.

FOE's new policy paper sits within its overall 'Big Ideas Change the World' project, which includes a heading for 'Consumption', but not a discrete one for 'Population'. The paper argues that, *"...a rights-based approach to accelerating the positive trend of declining rates of population growth is necessary. This is in order to achieve a peak in global population around mid-century so that well-being for all can be achieved on a planet degraded by climate change, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, water shortages etc."*

FOE is unique amongst the NGOs in being prepared to sign-up directly to the 6 Action Points put to all the NGOs. In its own words, FOE agrees with the Royal Society's argument that, *"...it is necessary to address both rising consumption levels and a growing population."* Director of Policy and Campaigns, Craig Bennett stated separately (pers. com) that in his view, FOE is taking up and acting on all 6 Action Points set out in what he described as the *"challenge document"* sent to the organisation. That is very welcome, but apart from drafting and publishing an updated policy position, it is not clear what proactive communications, campaigning or public policy work FOE is proposing.

Nevertheless, FOE was the only NGO to respond directly to the request to sign-up to the 6 Action Points and for that, the production of a new less equivocal policy paper on population and its willingness to debate the issue with its local groups, FOE edges ahead of the others into 1st place.





Initially, **The Wildlife Trusts** were way down the ranking at 7th place, as it took TWT, the parent body for the federation of the 47 independent Wildlife Trusts nationwide, the longest to get back to Robin Maynard – 6 months after the initial approach of 12th December 2012.

The Wildlife Trusts should be acutely aware of the population issue, given the views of many of its supporters, not least those of Sir David Attenborough, its former President, who is cited on its website and in promotional material as one of TWT's key patrons and champions. So, one might expect the organisation to heed his pithy words on human population pressure and be in the forefront of addressing it, *"All environmental problems become harder – and ultimately impossible – to solve with ever more people."*

Yet whilst acknowledging that population is a "serious issue" in what appeared to be TWT's last formal response of 30th May to Robin Maynard's request for an official stance on population, TWT's CEO seemed to give her final words on the issue, *"Of course the fact we have not prepared and approved a firm policy on population does not mean we don't think it's a serious issue. Clearly it is."*

We have not been involved in the debate to date and ... cannot afford to get caught up in a whirlwind of mis-interpretation and mis-understanding by issuing an ill-thought through opinion – not least in the context of

the rise of the far right and UKIP. We have a massive educational challenge on our hands around the relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world. We will let you know of any public line we take on population."



The Wildlife Trusts is understandably cautious about getting embroiled in taking up the challenge of debating or communicating the issues around population. The issue is certainly contentious and sadly the debate has been left to 'other voices' with different and often dubious agendas – all the more reason for respected and trusted bodies like TWT to enter the debate.

Then unexpectedly, four months after that apparently final response, TWT issued its 'Position on Population, Resource Use & Consumption in the UK' (produced after consultation with all 47 Wildlife Trusts nationwide). This public policy position is more comprehensive and open in acknowledging the importance of the population factor in addressing the concerns



Overall global biodiversity has declined by at least a third over the past 40 years – with many species close to collapse.

of nature conservation and environment bodies than any of the other NGOs, including that produced by Friends of the Earth - so catapults TWT up the ranking order from its initial 7th position to 2nd (FOE retains its ranking in first place given its willingness to meet and discuss the issues with Robin Maynard, put its policy out for debate and approval by its local groups, and its stated intention to follow through with some form of on-going action).

TWT's paper cites and accepts the 'I= PxAxT' formula '(Impact on our planet = combination of 3 factors: overall human numbers; amount each of us consumes; available technology/ efficiency providing those goods and services from the Earth's resources) and commits the organisation to taking action on the population issue, *"The Wildlife Trusts will work to inspire people and lead communities to value and take action for nature. As part of this, we will play our part in raising awareness and educating people about the impact of their consumption, what they consume, and the consequences of population growth for*

the natural world on which we all depend."

TWT's paper also clearly sets out the statistics and is admirably straight-talking about the impacts of continuing burgeoning human populations on the natural environment here in the UK and globally, *"The human population of the Earth has passed 7 billion and is expected to reach 9.3 billion by 2050.¹³ It is growing at a rate of almost 230,000 people every day.¹⁴ Increasing numbers of people will inevitably place greater pressures on the natural environment that ultimately provides humanity with everything on which it depends. In particular, England is already one of the most densely populated countries on Earth, and its population is growing."*

It seems that TWT has indeed heeded Sir David Attenborough's words.

3



Of the eight NGOs approached, only two – **CPRE** and FOE – accepted Robin Maynard's offer to meet and discuss the matters raised in the initial letter and accompanying briefings. They deserve and get credit for that – hence their ranking at the head of the field.

The acceptance from CPRE's Chief Executive, Shaun Spiers is worth quoting for its frank and friendly tone, *"I know your views are shared by many within CPRE (though there are also many members who think that even discussing population goes well beyond our remit). My concern is whether we could have a positive effect if we did more on the issue, and how to answer the inevitable question, "What would you do about it?" I realise that you are aware of these reservations. I would be delighted to meet to discuss the issue..."*

On its website, CPRE is happy to set out the alarming losses to Greenfield and Green Belt land due to development pressures, *"...a greenfield area nearly the size of Leicester vanishes under bricks, mortar, concrete and asphalt each year – in a country which is already one of the most heavily built up in the world."* But CPRE fails to mention the associated fact that England has recently taken the title from Holland as being the 'most densely populated country in Europe' – with c. 400 people per square kilometre.¹⁵ Nor does its recent 'Save Our Countryside' campaign make any mention of the projected UK population growth of 10 million more people by 2030 – the majority of whom are likely to be living in England.¹⁶ A projected growth requiring built development and infrastructure equivalent to 10 more Birminghams.¹⁷

England's people density is over 400 per square kilometre – rivalling Holland to claim the title of, 'most densely populated country in Europe.'

4

Greenpeace is ranked 4th because the organisation did commit to signing-up to a new policy statement on population, although one based on that drawn-up by Friends of the Earth, *"If FOE develops within the*

next month a policy with women's rights organisations and others, we will almost certainly support it."

Although the fact that Greenpeace is content to sign-up to a generic statement drawn-up by Friends of the Earth does not suggest that the organisation is giving much priority to the issue.



Greenpeace also took the longest (bar the The Wildlife Trusts) to acknowledge receipt of the initial letter, only responding after further prompting on 8th April 2013 – some 5 months after the first letter and batch of briefings were sent out to the NGOs. When it eventually came, Greenpeace's response did appear to show that the highest profile and normally most outspoken environmental campaigning group in the world had been considering and consulting on the issue, *"Yes, I've seen the brochures and also I have had an exchange with RSPB and FOE on this. Broadly, we are in agreement..."*

Despite its deserved reputation for taking on 'difficult' issues and bringing them before the public eye, Greenpeace's Chief Executive, John Sauven, expresses caution about taking up the challenge of campaigning on and communicating about population, *"There is a problem with just being "old white men" (myself included) or at least as spokespeople. It needs to diversify and particularly when talking about women's rights, girls "education etc. I think the other key issue is developing a position around UK population size. One agreeing what the size should be is controversial, but also a pathway to getting there once agreed. Not sure a China one child policy would work in UK."*

Full-marks for self-deprecating humour, but those 'problems' are all readily surmountable.

There are numerous highly-articulate spokespeople, male and female, in

Africa, Asia and Latin America who have the courage to speak out eloquently and humanely about the need to tackle population growth in their own countries, as well as at the global level in terms of overall human numbers and linked consumption patterns.

Nor was there any suggestion or implication anywhere in the briefings or letters sent out to the NGOs proposing "a China one child policy" for the UK or any other country. Quite the contrary, all the briefings underlined the need for any communication, campaigning or policy work to be based upon a voluntary, rights-based approach: *"Coercion has no place in any strategy seeking to achieve a sustainable global population."*

A more comprehensive Greenpeace view on population has been expressed by one of the organisation's founding members,

"For forty years, since the first United Nations environment meeting in Stockholm in 1972, environmentalists have debated whether we should include human population growth among the urgent challenges of human consumption, industrial toxins, species loss, global warming, and so forth. This debate appears to be resolved. Clearly, human population figures have an impact on the health of natural ecosystems."

Virtually every nation in the world seeks more commodities for its citizens, and a growing population multiplies the effect of this growing per-capita resource consumption. We could make all the right moves regarding energy systems, transportation, and recycling, and still overshoot Earth's capacity with unsustainable numbers of humans. It is a good sign that the United Nations now recognizes this"

Rex Weyler, director of original Greenpeace Foundation, co-founder Greenpeace International.¹⁸

5



The **RSPB's** initial reply was the most detailed and thoughtful from any of the NGOs. Chief Executive, Dr Mike Clarke stated up-front the RSPB's, "...*deep concern about the impact people are having on the planet and agree entirely that the size and growth rate of the human population make many environmental problems harder to solve.*"

Dr Clarke also went further than any other NGO Chief Executive in offering his "personal view" that, "...*slowing population through universal access to reproductive health care etc. ... will contribute to better health and development outcomes for human society*".

That point is generally accepted by Government ministers, DFID and the aid agencies, but needs to be repeated regularly to ensure it is translated into reality. Although access to reproductive health care is a human right enshrined in Millennium Development Goal 5B, it is still denied to at least 220 million women worldwide - so a public endorsement from the RSPB, with its million plus members in the UK and international outreach, would be very welcome indeed.

Despite highlighting this unmet need for "*universal access to reproductive health*", Dr Clarke would not commit the RSPB to signing up to the 3rd Take Action point in the briefing, "*Support and advocate the principle of universal access to safe, affordable family planning for all women*

throughout the world."

After that first, thoughtful response from RSPB, no further, detailed comments were offered to our later promptings. Although in acknowledging our final outreach to all the NGOs checking the accuracy and finality of the comments we had received and our analysis of them, Dr Clarke stated, "*I see no factual errors in the section on RSPB. I have nothing to add to my earlier correspondence, except to reiterate that human population growth is an issue we take seriously, and is one we have researched in some detail. We have determined how we properly address this matter in relation to our charitable purpose. We do not agree with the way your briefing has framed the issue nor with your recommendations.*" So from starting off as a promising front-runner, RSPB fell back to 5th position.

Internationally, RSPB through its membership of Birdlife International, is more outspoken on the impacts on its core concerns of population growth:

"Linking IBAs (Important Breeding Areas) and striking a balance between developed and underdeveloped areas will be key in saving birds in our ever more crowded world."

RSPB/Birdlife's Flyways programme.



6

WWT's Chief Executive, Martin Spray, made a strong statement concerning population in his regular column in the July/September 2012 issue of Waterlife (WWT's members' magazine)

ahead of any approach on the issue from Robin Maynard, *"There is no doubt that the impact we have made as a species on this planet is massive. In our race for expansion, development and growth, we continue to make increasing use of the world's natural resources, in many cases unsustainably for future generations. We have destroyed vast areas of natural habitats for our agriculture and development. **As our population increases, so do the pressures we place on our small and only home.**"*

(RM emphasis added).



So it was disappointing to receive WWT's rather slow response (27/3/13) to the first letter of 12th December 2012, simply stating, *"While the issue of population growth is undoubtedly a very important one, WWT's core area of concern is with the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands and their species, both in the UK and overseas."*

The briefings sent to WWT set out the evidence based and stark statistics which are certainly relevant to WWT's core area of concern:

- *"Human related factors threaten 99% of the most imperilled bird species"- Winged Messengers – The Decline of Birds, WorldWatch Institute, 2003*
- *44% of known populations of water birds are falling and particularly in the poorest, most water-stressed countries where population growth has been or remains high – State of the World's Waterbirds, Wetlands International, 2010.*

The response to Robin Maynard's follow-up letters was delegated to WWT's Conservation Policy Officer, who whilst acknowledging, *"...that population growth is an issue which affects all of us,"* went on to put the organisation's faith in "efficiency" and "demand management". Adding, *"We believe that a more sustainable future can be achieved through efficiency measures and demand management, avoiding unsustainable resource use and waste by a growing population."*

WWT should note the conclusion (provided in the briefings) by Professor Tim Jackson, author of 'Prosperity without Growth', that the rate of carbon cutting required, if the projected medium global population of 9.6 billion people in 2050 is to have a living standard comparable to our own, is 16 times greater than that achieved over the past 20 years. Hence Jackson's observation, *"...simplistic assumptions that capitalism's propensity for efficiency will allow us to stabilise the climate and protect against resource scarcity are nothing short of delusional."*

WWT might also recall the words of its founder (also of WWF), Sir Peter Scott,

"If the human population of the world continues to increase at its current rate, there will soon be no room for either wild life or wild places... But I believe that sooner or later man will learn to limit his overpopulation. Then he will be much more concerned with optimum rather than maximum, quality rather than quantity, and will recover the need within himself for contact with wilderness and wild nature."





**National
Trust**

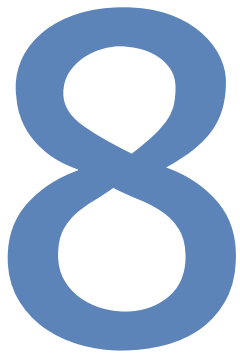
Although the **National Trust** is extending its mission from that of simply “*protecting special places*” into the broader spheres of sustainable development and well-being, it is not yet regarded as a core member of the environment movement for which population should certainly be an issue. Nevertheless, the Trust’s agenda and membership overlaps with that of CPRE, many of whose supporters have long called for the organisation to be more outspoken on population.

NT did respond promptly to the initial letter and accompanying briefings, acknowledging the importance of the issues therein, “*The points you raise about the general stance of NGOs on the issue of UK population are interesting. As are the briefing documents you kindly enclosed...*”

Whilst recognising that the issues of consumption and population have a significant impact on one another however, these issues fall outside of our areas of specialism. We do take into consideration population projections from the ONS when forming our own strategic forward look, although we would not become more actively involved than this.”

Given that the Office of National Statistics projections for UK population growth are for a further 10 million people by 2030 – the majority of whom will be living in England¹⁹ - the Trust might do more than just “*consider*” the data. The future prospect of 10 million more people (requiring infrastructure and services equivalent to 10 more cities the size of Birmingham), means that population issues will certainly come to impinge upon the Trust’s “*areas of specialism.*”

Over the past
century, an average
6,500 hectares
of land
has left agriculture every
year most going for built
development.



With an overall income (£66 million) and a budget of over £7 million each year allocated for “communicating, influencing and awareness”,²⁰ WWF-UK has considerable resources to draw on if it chose to

tackle the population issue head-on. With WWF International as the co-author of one of the key reports (which provided the evidence underpinning our case for the NGOs to engage more actively and publicly with population issues), one might expect WWF-UK to be not just the leading UK conservation body but taking the lead in the UK on these issues.

The Living Planet Report 2012 (LPR 2012) is produced and published by the Global Footprint Network and the WWF International in collaboration with the



Zoological Society of London and the European Space Agency – and both WWF-UK’s website and its Annual Review for 2012 do give the report some prominence.²¹

Bearing the Panda logo prominently on the front-cover, LPR 2012 states, *“With the world already in ecological overshoot, continued growth in population and per person footprint is clearly not a sustainable path.”*

And concludes, *“Human population dynamics are a major driving force behind environmental degradation. One aspect of this is the overall size of the global population, which has more than doubled since 1950 – to 7 billion in 2011 and is forecast to reach just over 9.3 billion by 2050.”*

So the initial response to the briefings (underpinned by the LPR 2012 facts and findings) sent to WWF-UK’s Chief Executive, David Nussbaum, that the UK-body does not consider the issue a strategic priority, was disappointing and surprising,

“We’ve just completed a strategic review in WWF-UK, and while human population isn’t going to be one of the things we focus on (like all organisations, we have to choose where and how to focus our work), our understanding and interventions are informed by many of the considerations you set out in the materials you sent through.”

As you’ll know, given your history of working with WWF, the production of the Living Planet Report is led from WWF International in Gland, and I also know that those responsible for the LPR are conscious of the significance of population and biodiversity loss and consumption.”

In correspondence, David Nussbaum strongly contested our interpretation that WWF-UK was in any way seeking to distance itself from WWF International, but rather arguing that his response emphasised, *“the similarity in the perspectives of WWF-UK, WWF International and the LPR 2012”*.

That said, there does still appear to be a gap in coherence and consistency, given the unequivocal connection the LPR 2012 makes between ‘human population dynamics’ and ‘environmental degradation’, and the lack of any similarly clear public statements made or policy positions set out by WWF-UK.

Other commentators within the ‘WWF family’ are less reluctant. Don Hinrichsen, editor of WWF’s People and Planet magazine, has reflected on the catastrophic decline in global biodiversity recorded in the Living Planet Report: *“Despite the optimism of the 1990s and the impressive list of conventions and treaties ratified by governments, the world is still confronted by the same set of intractable environment and resource challenges. These pressures have been exacerbated by continued rapid population growth, especially in the poorest countries – those least able to cope with growing numbers and their needs.”*

In the course of our research, on the stance of UK conservation and environment NGOs on the issue of population, we did receive the following response from the organisation’s Supporter Care Co-ordinator sent out to a WWF-UK member who had asked about WWF’s position on population: *“Many thanks for your query with reference to WWF-UK’s position on population. We recognise that the trends to both a rapid rise in global population and a huge increase in average human per capita consumption of the Earth’s limited resources are placing great pressure on the earth’s natural resources and we*

support policies which tackle both of these key drivers.

The degradation of our natural environment can be attributed to two factors:

1. The profligate use of limited resources by more affluent sectors of the global population, linked to growing levels of inequity between and within nations.

2. The unprecedented growth in global human population since the 19th century, and especially in the last 50 years.

For WWF-UK, this is not an either/or debate. Both issues put pressure on the Earth's limited bio-capacity and threaten the very existence of species, habitats and ecosystems, and both need to be addressed in order for the one planet vision to be achievable. Indeed, there are links between the two factors: inequitable distribution of resources results in poverty, which is a key driver of population growth."

David Nussbaum has subsequently stated that he 'explicitly' endorsed the above statement and that it shows there is no substance to our claim that there is any lack of clarity as to WWF-UK's stance on the population issue. Had such a response been provided at the outset, rather than grudgingly acknowledged only once asked about it, WWF-UK's position on the table might have been different.

Of all the organisations whose positions we reviewed, and from whom we sought responses to our enquiries, we expected WWF-UK, given its resources and supporting evidence, to be the leading body – and to be offering much-needed leadership and policy guidance to its fellow NGOs, the public and policy-makers. That has turned out not to be the case.



Wildlife and Countryside Link – although not an independent environment NGO, Wildlife Link is the coordinating 'umbrella' body for the UK's main nature conservation, environment and wildlife bodies. Link was therefore contacted as back-up to the individual approaches to the NGOs and as the conduit to the wider conservation and wildlife group network. The open and honest response from the body's coordinator is illuminating,

"As part of Link's recent strategic review, not one member identified population as a priority for Link work. That is not to say that they don't consider it important per se, and I know that many of them, as you say, are addressing the issue. However, Link's members clearly do not consider this to be a priority issue for Link at this time."²²

NB - All the 8 NGOs approached are signed-up members of Link.

220 million
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contraceptive methods
they want.



Do the NGO HQs know what their local branch/group members and activists think about the population issue?

None of the NGOs responded to Robin Maynard's suggestion that the relevant briefings might be sent round to their local supporter groups and/or more widely to their members as part of a consultation/discussion exercise. Nor did any answer the question put to them in a second letter sent out to all of the NGOs in March 2013 as to, *"Whether they had ever canvassed their local groups/branches as to their views on the issue of population?"*

Given this lack of clarity as to what the NGO's own supporters thought about the issue, Robin Maynard contacted them directly via the publicly available email/postal addresses – sending out PDFs of the briefings on request to CPRE, FOE and Greenpeace local activists, as well as to the RSPB's regional offices.

Emails/PDFs were sent to 51 CPRE local branches; 147 FOE local groups; Greenpeace local/regional contacts where available; and RSPB regional offices.

That outreach exercise provoked some communication between NGO's national offices and their local/regional supporters. CPRE subsequently sent round a stock position statement (available on request) to their local branches and supporters. Friends of the Earth went further, making population a discussion item for their Local Groups gathering of mid-July 2013. Subsequently, we learned that The Wildlife Trusts had also canvassed views on its new policy paper from the federation of 47 independent Wildlife Trusts nationwide.

Examples of some of the responses received from NGO local groups/branches:

"I would certainly like to declare sharing the intensity of Robin Maynard's feelings for this issue. I think he presents a very balanced

and cogent paper, which exactly fits in with the holistic view that CPRE states it takes towards conserving the countryside. The pressure on the countryside is from people, nothing else. To ignore this would be to miss the point. If anything some of his data are slightly out of date - for example this year the UK passed Holland as the most populous country in Europe."

"I believe this is a very important paper as it relates each issue with all others - the impact of population and consumption, the way we live our lives (both individually and through group economics in a debt-driven economy) our use of land and the crucial debate about whether we have enough to not only enjoy for what it is, and provide the space for the other animals it should be able to support, but also to grow our food on it, build houses on, produce energy from it, and support our infrastructures as well. To consider any one without all the others is missing the big picture, and risking coming up with a wrong answer if you don't really understand the significance of the question."

"I think this matter is absolutely central to the work we do. There are simply too many of us, particularly in this country. It is the enormous pressure on land that has led to attacks by successive governments on the planning laws over the past twelve years, attacks which have seriously weakened them. We must do something before we lose the countryside altogether."

"I have every sympathy with your wish to make as many other environmental bodies as possible aware of the population-dimension in everything they aim at"

"I think it is impossible to disagree with the sentiments of world population, I cannot comment on the facts but I think it is a well-considered document..."



"I for one have always placed population at the top of the list of threats to global stability and nothing would make me happier than to include it on our agenda down here."

"I applied for a job at FOE and failed to get it on the basis of my response to the standard interview question, 'Which, in your opinion, is the most important environmental problem that we are facing today?' Needless to say, I answered, 'Population', which, as it increases exponentially, aggravates every single environmental problem"

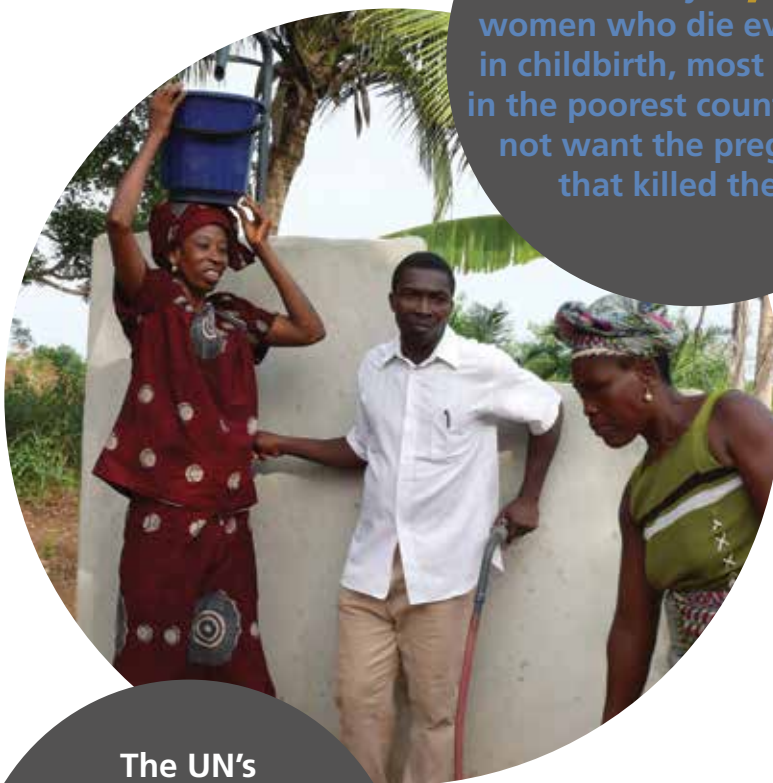
"I think such a stance could strengthen our case and keep us in line with current thinking".

Those responses reflect recent public opinion polls,

- A YouGov survey carried out in May 2011 of 3,538 UK adults found that almost four out of five (79%) thought the UK population was too high, with almost half (45%) saying it was much too high
- Over four out of five (84%) thought the world population was too high, with over half (53%) thinking it was much too high.²³

400

of the nearly **1,000** women who die every day in childbirth, most of them in the poorest countries, did not want the pregnancy that killed them.



The UN's medium projection for a future world population is **9.6 billion by 2050** – but the range extends from as 'low' as 8 billion to as high as 11 billion.



Appendices

NGO ranking table

The NGOs were ranked on 10 criteria (Low scores i.e. 1 = best; High scores i.e. 8 = worst),

- A. Speed of response
- B. Acceptance of offer to meet and discuss issue
- C. Acknowledgement that population is a factor
- D. Openness to consult supporters/members
- E. Commitment to producing a current policy position (taking into account latest reports)
- F. Putting that position or anything about population up on their website
- G. Sign-up to all or any of the above 6 Take Action points
- H. The 'natural fit' between their organisation and having a position on population.
- I. Best explanation for position/non-position
- J. Worst explanation for position/non-position.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
FOE	1	1	2	4	1	1?	3	7	2	2	1st (24)
TWT	8	8	2	5	1	1	2	5	4	3	2nd (39)
CPRE	2	1	3	6	5	6	8	6	6	5	3rd (48)
Gp	8	8	3	8	3?	4?	5?	7	6	6	4th (58)
RSPB	5	8	3	8	6?	6?	8	5	6	4	5th (59)
WWT	6	8	3	8	8	8	8	7	3	4	6th (63)
NT	3	8	6	8	8	8	8	5	5	5	7th (64)
WWF - UK	3	8	7	8	7	7	8	8	8	8	8th (72)

Explanation of the ranking and adjustments (only where not obvious/more detail required)

Normally fleet of foot campaigning organisations, able to react to policy proposals in a matter of hours or days at the most, were slow and (with a couple of exceptions) seemed reluctant to engage. It took more than 6 months to draw anything specific from any of the NGOs and required at least 3 promptings and follow-ups by letter and email.

E. Commitment to producing a current policy position (taking into account latest reports)

Greenpeace and RSPB both have question marks by their rankings, because whilst both organisations stated that they would be producing a policy position on population, neither have as yet.

The Wildlife Trusts (TWT) achieved a good (low) score on this criterion initially because a policy paper on population had been commissioned from an external source, although nothing had emerged publicly from that initiative at the time of the first draft of this summary ranking. Then subsequently, TWT's comprehensive position paper was published causing a review and major rise in

its previously ranked position from 7th up to 2nd position. Given the clear comments from its patron, Sir David Attenborough, about the impacts of human population growth TWT should have a strong natural fit for being engaged in the issue (the stronger the natural fit and the weaker the actions taken, the higher the score)

F. Putting that position or anything about population up on their website

FOE's new revised policy paper has now been put up on its website. See: http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/population_friends_of_the.pdf

NB – the first paper that 'Population' search reaches is the outdated 2010 paper. The link above goes to current, updated August 2013 paper.

Greenpeace stated that it will endorse that FOE policy paper – but nothing has as yet appeared on website and a search produces nothing on population.

CPRE – currently there is no population policy paper or reference to population directly anywhere on the website. Previously, a determined and protracted search would take you to a short article written by CEO Shaun Spiers titled, 'Breaking the population taboo?' This first appeared in The Countryman magazine and was then published on 9th August 2011 in CPRE's supporters' magazine as an opinion piece. It is no longer appears to be available on the website.

CPRE also sent round a standard response to Robin Maynard's approaches and the accompanying, 'Why Population Matters to CPRE' briefing to its local branches.

RSPB - stated that it would be putting up a response on its website at some point – but whilst a search for population/population policy produces results for bird populations, there is nothing at time of writing about human population directly.

The Wildlife Trusts – the new policy paper can be found here: <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/files/TWT%20Population%20Resources%20Consumption%20Statement%20FINAL%201%2008-13.pdf>

WWF-UK – There is no direct reference to the issue of human population growth and its impacts on WWF-UK's website currently. As with RSPB, a search for 'population' brings up plenty of results concerning the declining populations of numerous endangered non-human species. Searching for 'population

policy' brings up at result 26, an entry for the Living Report 2008 (two versions back from the latest 2012 Living Planet report):

"In addition, the new report shows that populations of nearly 1,700 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish have declined on average by nearly 30% since 1970. The situation is particularly bleak in tropical regions, where the average fall is 51%.

These extremely disappointing downward trends stem from a growing human population's increasing 'footprint': our rampant consumption of resources such as timber and paper, water, energy, agricultural crops, meat and dairy products, fish and seafood, and land for infrastructure – as well as the impacts associated with disposing of waste products."

Although LP2012 is on its website, (See: http://www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/about_us/living_planet_report_2012/) WWF-UK does not draw any attention to or conclusions from the report's acknowledgement that human population growth is a significant factor behind the decline in the populations of non-human species.

G. Sign-up to all or any of the above 6 Take Action points

None of the NGOs said unequivocally that they would sign-up to all the proffered Take Action points – although FOE (and possibly Greenpeace - if it follows FOE's lead as stated) can be judged as implicitly signing up to several points – 1,2 and 3 in particular.

The Wildlife Trust's new position paper also acknowledges and reflects a number of the Take Action points.

References

¹ 'Too Many Bodies? The Return and Disavowal of the Population Question', Environmental Politics vol. 22.2 (March 2013), pp. 195-215 <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/politics/our-research/projects>

² Robin Maynard is a free-lance environmental campaigner and writer. He has worked for several NGOs over the past 25 years including Friends of the Earth, FARM and the Soil Association. This initiative was carried out on behalf of Population Matters, but led by Robin Maynard as an independent project.

³ The briefings are available as PDFs.

⁴ The UN revised its medium projection upwards from 9.3 billion to 9.6 billion in the latest data set published in June 2013, "World population projected to reach 9.6 billion by 2050 with most growth in developing regions, especially Africa – says UN". http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Documentation/pdf/WPP2012_Press_Release.pdf

⁵ Population & Sustainability Network: <http://www.populationandsustainability.org/16/mision-and-aims/mision-aims.html>

⁶ Reproduction and the carbon legacies of individuals, Paul A. Murtaugh, Michael G. Schlax, Department of Statistics, Oregon State University, 44 Kidder Hall, Corvallis, OR 97331, USA College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331, USA

http://blog.oregonlive.com/environment_impact/2009/07/carbon%20legacy.pdf

⁷ YouGov survey, May 2011

⁸ <http://royalsociety.org/policy/projects/people-planet/report/>

⁹ http://www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/about_us/living_planet_report_2012/

¹⁰ <http://www.ecoglobe.org/population/agerley/ipat.html>

¹¹ http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/population_friends_of_the.pdf

¹² TWT's annual income stands at £22 million, out of a total of £137 million for the overall network of 47 County Wildlife Trusts <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/annualreview>

¹³ UN 2010. World Population Prospects, the 2010 Revision. Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>.

¹⁴ Ottaway, R. & G. Hutchinson (2011): Sex, Ideology, Religion. Ten Myths About World Population Growth.

¹⁵ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/2967374/England-is-most-crowded-country-in-Europe.html>

¹⁶ ONS, National Population Projections, 2009.

¹⁷ <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/Blogs/makingwaves/population-and-ecology/blog/44620/>

¹⁸ http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/wwf_uk_annual_review_2012_1.pdf

¹⁹ Most recent ONS projections for the UK for 2051: Low 67m; Medium 76 m; High 86m - ranging between 7 and 45 more Manchesterers. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/>

²⁰ http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/wwf_uk_annual_review_2012_1.pdf http://www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/about_us/living_planet_report_2012/

²¹ http://www.wwf.org.uk/wwf_articles.cfm?unevid=915

²² Dr Elaine King, Link's Co-ordinator, email of 8 May

²³ <http://populationmatters.org/2011/population-matters-news/people-uk-population-high/?phpMyAdmin=e11b8b687c20198d9ad050fbb1aa7f2f>



"All environmental problems become harder – and ultimately impossible – to solve with ever more people."

Sir David Attenborough

Find out more

Further information on Population issues can be found at:

www.unfpa.org

www.populationmatters.org

www.appg-popdevrh.org.uk

www.populationandsustainability.org

The above organisations' websites are provided as sources for further information only - they are not cited here as endorsing this report.

This briefing is an independent report drafted by Robin Maynard and edited and overseen by Jonathon Porritt.

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