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Dear Clare

## United Utilities' Green Recovery Programme

Thank you for your e-mail of 13 January 2021.

Firstly, I would like to say that we are greatly impressed by the level of ambition expressed in United Utilities' Green Recovery plans. These are a welcome and important contribution to the urgent need for nature's recovery in Cumbria. The programme demonstrates how the Company will play its part in achieving the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and help to create a Nature Recovery Network which will be a statutory element in the forthcoming Environment Act.

We consider that the proposed restoration of damaged peatlands will make an important contribution to climate mitigation and improved resilience through protecting substantial existing stores of carbon in the Haweswater catchment. We also welcome the ambition to restore these peatlands to a healthy condition so that they can once again sequester new atmospheric carbon.

Cumbria Wildlife Trust is therefore delighted to be able to support this proposal, both in terms of United Utilities ambitions for Green Recovery in general, but also in particular, for the significant benefits this programme will bring to Haweswater.

The Trust and United Utilities have previously worked successfully in partnership to restore peatlands in this catchment but the work is far from complete and so the proposal to invest in further landscape-scale restoration is important.

We consider that the proposed Haweswater restoration programme will deliver multiple Green Recovery benefits. The investment will accelerate the process of delivering natural solutions which can contribute to resolving a number of environmental issues, such as:

**Water quality.** Peatlands should produce clean water. Dissolved Organic Carbon (DOC), Particulate Organic Carbon (POC) and water discolouration are all associated



with damage to bogs and cause costly issues for water treatment.

**Carbon storage.** Peatlands should capture and store carbon from the atmosphere. The loss of DOC and POC is accompanied by direct loss of carbon to the atmosphere from bacterial and fungal activity in damaged, drained bogs, as they dry out.

**Water flow attenuation.** There is good evidence that damaged peatlands have higher rates of run-off than intact bogs and restoration slows the flow rate of run-off.

**Biodiversity.** Undamaged bogs have a highly unusual and specialised biodiversity, which is dependent on the proper functioning of the bog ecosystem.

**Climate resilience.** There is good evidence to show that damaged bogs are significantly more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and extreme weather events than peatlands that are functioning properly.

The Haweswater programme will use well-established physical restoration techniques to raise the water table with the key final outcome being the re-establishment of a naturally functioning vegetation layer dominated by *Sphagnum* mosses. This layer of *Sphagnum* protects the underlying peat from erosion and re-starts the process of active growth and carbon sequestration through peat deposition.

Cumbria Wildlife Trust has been at the forefront of peatland and upland habitat restoration in the UK for many years and our activities align with, and complement those of United Utilities at sites like Haweswater, Thirlmere and Ennerdale.

The Trust employs a specialist team of staff who have a great deal of experience and expertise in bog restoration and restorative upland land management. We have, for example, successfully delivered restoration projects on-time and within budget across c3000ha of degraded bogs in Cumbria in recent years.

Alongside match-funding from other external sources that we anticipate being able to access as partners, we consider the cost assumptions identified in the Green Recovery proposal will be adequate to restore 500ha of peatland at Haweswater, based on our recent experience of restoration projects.

The 3.5-year restoration programme would help safeguard the employment of the Trust's team of specialist peatland restoration staff (4 roles) and also support jobs with locally-based specialist peatland contractors (circa 6 roles).

Cumbria Wildlife Trust therefore wholeheartedly supports this partnership proposal.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Trotter  
Chief Executive