

# BREXIT AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY: Challenges and Opportunities

---

**Prof Sue Hartley**

President, British Ecological Society  
York Environmental Sustainability  
Institute, University of York



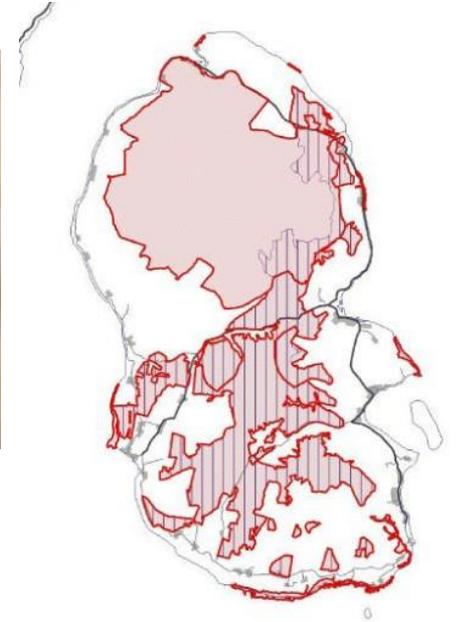
# THE CHALLENGES: EU Law

- EU driver of UK environmental policy/legislation for long time; leaving could put ~70% environmental protection laws at risk

- **Conservation:** Habitats Directive (1992)  
Birds Directive (1992)
- **Pollution:** Nitrates Directive (1991)  
National Emissions Ceilings Directive (2001)
- **Ecosystems:** Water Framework Directive (2000)  
Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008)
- **Policy:** Common Agricultural Policy (1962+)  
Common Fisheries Policy (2014)



# Arran Moors Special Protection Area

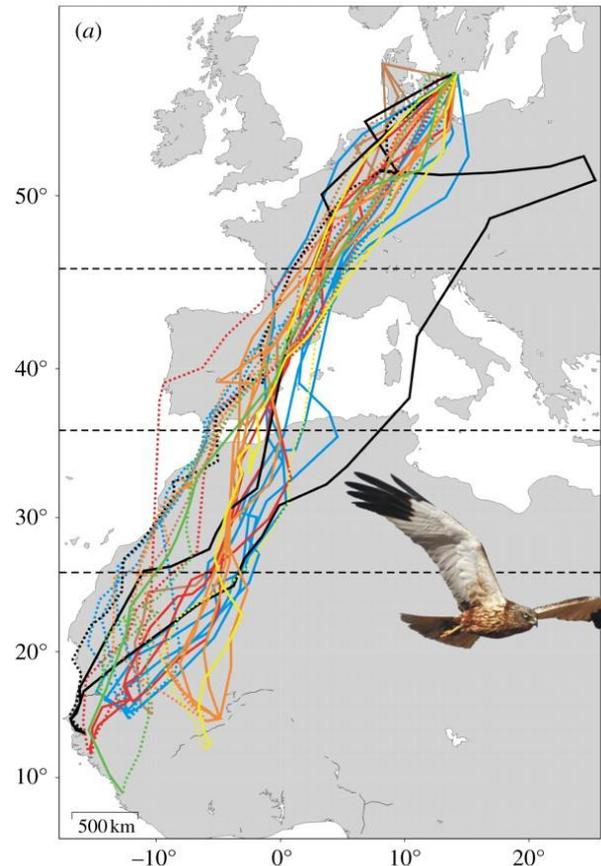


“ I personally believe that our country’s greatest resource – its nature – will be better protected and better preserved for our future generations if we remain an active, full partner within Europe”



# CHALLENGES: cross-border impacts

- Environmental issues don't stop at borders: common standards and shared data are needed for effective protection



# CHALLENGES: international collaboration

- Do we have a stronger voice on environmental issues inside or outside organisations like the EU?



“We have always been an institution with a global outlook....reflected in the diversity of our student and staff population, and in our desire to contribute to solving the world’s most pressing challenges. Through our teaching and our research, we will continue to demonstrate the value of collaboration”



# “BRITISH” ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY

- BES has members from 88 different countries and almost a quarter of the membership lives outside the UK



**BES** **sfé** **2014** **BES and SFÉ Joint Annual Meeting**  
9-12 December, Lille, France

**OVERVIEW** #AM14 [BritishEcologicalSociety.org/AM2014](http://BritishEcologicalSociety.org/AM2014)

**Your favourite Oral Sessions and Posters**

- Ecosystem Ecology
- Climate Change & Ecosystem Services
- Soils & Agricultural Ecology
- Forest and Aquatic Ecology
- Evolutionary and Physiological Ecology
- Biodiversity, Conservation & Ecosystem Services
- Parasites, Pathogens, Predators, Pollinators and more Ps!

**Keynote Speakers:**

 <b>Pedro Jordano:</b> Heads Spanish panel for the National Research Plan, Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación	 <b>Anne Lørgårdier:</b> Head of Science in Society at the International Council for Science	 <b>Camille Parmesan:</b> In her capacity as a Lead Author, she shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize to IPCC
---	--	---

**10 Thematic Symposia:**

- Ecological networks: from descriptions to predictions  
*Sonia Ekl, Zsuzsanna Pósfai, Daniel B. Stouffer*
- Eco-evolutionary feedbacks: theoretical and empirical perspectives  
*Francesca Dallaire, François Massad*
- Ecological Implications of Tree Diseases  
*Allan Hamrick, Glenn Iason, Ruth Mitchell, Andy Taylor*
- Pan-European Parasite Ecology: Linking Early-Career Researchers  
*Jon Bailey*
- Ménage à trois: ecological consequences of intricate interactions between plants, microbes and insects  
*Aryon Maria, Anne Trigg*
- Accelerating ecology and biodiversity research via ecometagenomics: species, communities, and environmental DNA  
*Holly Ell, Simon Chase, Dorothea Paraszczak, W. Eddy Thomas*
- Reforming and Implementing the Common Agricultural Policy, the role of science and the need to understand policy-making  
*Andreas Balm, Tim Graham, Guy Potts, Piero Nicolini*
- Biological impacts of climate change: Reconciling macro-scale patterns with local-scale processes  
*Richard Pearson, Blake Suttle*
- Extending freshwater management beyond shorelines by linking aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems  
*Andrew J. Tarnanovic*
- Genomics in marine monitoring: New opportunities for assessing marine health status  
*Matthew Hill, Elizabeth Payton*

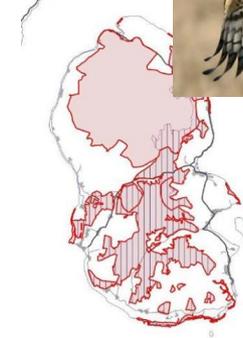
**JOIN US!**

**Workshops and Social Events:**

- Special Interest Groups from France, UK and more
- Careers, Grants, Policy, Publications, Statistics etc. Workshops
- Gala Dinner with Warblefly (live music)
- Innovative, fun networking events

# THE BES AND BREXIT

- “It is essential that we retain the successful components of EU legislation for effective environmental protection within the UK”
- “Many ecological issues are of international concern and impact, so effective cross-border collaboration is essential”
- “International research collaboration is vital for advancing ecological science; strong international partnerships and the free movement of people and ideas is critical”



COP21- CMP11  
**PARIS 2015**  
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE



# THE OPPORTUNITY: evidence-based policy?

“It is vital that we ensure that any changes in legislation as a consequence of the vote to leave the EU are informed by the best ecological evidence.” **BES**

“Our comprehensive strategy to eradicate bovine TB in England is delivering results”  
**George Eustice MP Farming Minister**

“This is a huge disappointment for evidence-based policy making” **Prof Rosie Woodroffe, ZSL**

# OPPORTUNITY: visionary leadership?

- EU environmental protection has been good, but not been enough to prevent spp declines & environmental degradation
- There is a clear need not to just maintain existing standards, but improve on current law with ambitious new ones
- **Can the UK be a world leader in environmental policy?**
- Deliver better nature protection, reductions in air and water pollution, and more sustainable land and fisheries management than the EU
- We have the track record in one area:



# OPPORTUNITY: ambitious action?

- Carefully evaluate available policy options
- Capitalise on best practice from UK, EU and globally
- Think creatively about “radical” alternatives e.g. rewilding
- Develop integrated approaches e.g. link fisheries & land management
- Devise more sustainable and equitable quota and payment systems

# KEY QUESTIONS FOR UK POLICY

- Environmental Audit Committee concluded EU membership improved UK's approach to the environment and ensured that it has been better protected.....
- How will we maintain current levels of protection for wildlife – can we keep EU Directives in the face of political pressures?
- How would CAP be reformed – can we restructure support for UK agriculture so more incentives to support biodiversity and environmentally sustainable land management?
- Who will evaluate the best (and worst!) aspects of current environmental policy and devise improvements?
- How will new policies be administered; will that differ between the devolved administrations?

# BUT...unmanageable expectations?

- 92% fisherman voted leave expecting to be able to fish more?  
– but 88 per cent of European fish stocks are over-fished
- 59% farmers said would vote leave to escape “red tape” but are now worried about subsidies and access to migrant labour

---

## British fishermen warned Brexit will not mean greater catches

Fisheries chiefs and campaigners say current catch quotas will continue until the UK leaves the EU, and new arrangements may not be more generous

## **Brexit: Farmers who backed Leave now regret vote over subsidy fears**

Parliament warned dropping funding for farming will 'collapse the fabric of rural society'

Harriet Sinclair | Saturday 30 July 2016 | [1393 comments](#)

# BUT....conflicting priorities?

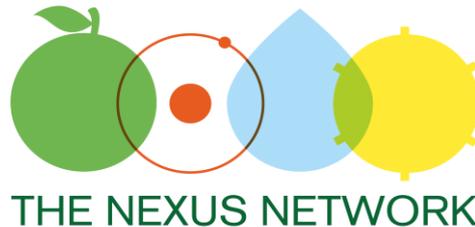
- CAP reform one of most contentious areas – our countryside asked to deliver biodiversity, food production & other services
- What subsidy regime will deliver all these outcomes and keep range different stakeholders happy?!
- “In future, 100% of any public payment should be conditional on meeting higher standards of wildlife, soil & water” **NT**
- “We shouldn’t contemplate anything which undermines British farming’s competitiveness or its ability to produce food” **NFU**

# BUT...sufficient expertise?

- Government departments used to implementation of existing EU policies, not design of new UK ones: different skill sets and more people required!
- DEFRA has lost 2/3rds of its staff since 2005
- Environment and agricultural policies are devolved – will we have/need different policies in different UK nations?
- Increasingly complex landscape of interacting issues.....



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



# NGOs AND UK ACADEMIA CAN HELP!

- Substantial expertise in UK:
  - Ecology and conservation science
  - Biodiversity and ecosystem services
  - Environmental sustainability
  - Policy evaluation



CECAN - funded and supported by the following organisations



# TIME TO MOBILISE NOT MOURN!

- Seize the opportunity for a UK environment bill to inspire the world?
- BES and other organisations need to stand together and make our voice heard
- We can capitalise on UK's world leading academic ability in natural capital, policy evaluation, ecological and conservation science
- We need to engage with government, businesses and the public to demonstrate the opportunities – in a positive campaign!

