

Curriculum Vitae for Craig BENNETT

Chief Executive, [The Wildlife Trusts](#)



(Standing for position of IUCN Councillor Elected from The Region – West Europe)

Summary

Craig is Chief Executive of [The Wildlife Trusts](#), Honorary Professor of Sustainability and Innovation at [Alliance Manchester Business School](#), and an Associate Fellow of [Homerton College, The University of Cambridge](#). He is also a Commissioner on the [UK Government's Clean Power 2030 Advisory Commission](#).

He has been described as “one of the country’s top environmental campaigners”, by *The Guardian* as [“the very model of a modern eco-general”](#) and in 2020 was included in [The Sunday Times Green Power List](#) of the UK’s top 20 environmentalists. Craig was formerly CEO of [Friends of the Earth UK](#) where he led the organisation to numerous campaign victories including on bees, fracking and against airport expansion. He has extensive experience of governance of complex international environmental organisations, having served on the boards of both [Friends of the Earth Europe](#) and [Friends of the Earth International](#), as well as many other boards.

He has a very strong reputation as an engaging and inspirational public speaker, media performer and thought leader. He has extensive experience of the broadcast media and has had many articles printed in national and international newspapers.

Professional Experience

Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trusts (April 2020 - present)

Leadership of the UK’s largest federated wildlife charity, with 46 independently run local trusts, 2,300 nature reserves, 3700 staff, and 930k members. Directly responsible for leadership and management of central secretariat.

- Led and facilitated a major strategy process to create the first ever “Federation-wide strategy” for The Wildlife Trusts as a whole, resulting in much greater strategic alignment across 47 separate organisations. (See: [Bringing Nature Back – The Wildlife Trusts’ Strategy 2030](#))
- Refocussed a traditional ‘nature conservation’ organisation into one focussed on ‘nature restoration’, delivering renewed vigour, and heightened profile in the process
- Put Community Organising at the heart of strategic delivery, stimulating a step change in [Community-Led approaches to nature recovery](#), involving over 1600 local communities.
- Championed the role of [Nature Based Solutions](#), and put a spotlight on the interlinkages between the climate and nature crises, including on the need for [Climate Adaptation for Nature](#).
- Overhauled and streamlined Federation governance, to make it more agile and fit for purpose
- Secured strong growth in income and membership, during a difficult economic climate

CEO, Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) (July 2015 – March 2020)

Leadership and management of one of the UK’s leading environmental campaign organisations, with approx. 200 staff, 250 Local Community Groups, 280k supporters, and annual budget of £13.5m.

- Won campaigns objectives on Bees, Clean Air, and Stopping Fracking
- Increased organisational profile, resulting in strong growth in organisational membership and income
- Secured strong growth in affiliated community groups
- Established a new “Youth and Families” division, launching Young Friends of the Earth
- Modernised governance, and created new place on the Board for a Youth Board member
- As a Board Member of Friends of the Earth Europe, played the lead role in recruitment of a new Director.

Director of Policy and Campaigns, Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) September 2010 – June 2015

- Successfully delivered a departmental “turnaround” from an underperforming department in 2010 to winning numerous environmental campaigns, and best of sector awards in 2014.

Deputy Director, The University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) and Director, The Prince of Wales’s Corporate Leaders Group on Climate Change May 2007 – September 2010

- Transformed the [Corporate Leaders Group \(CLG\)](#) from a small, UK and EU focussed initiative running an ad-hoc series of events, into one of the most progressive business voices in the international climate change agenda.
- Conceived, drafted and led the CLG’s work on [The Bali Communiqué](#), [The Poznan Communiqué](#) and [The Copenhagen Communiqué](#), the latter of which became the definitive progressive statement from the international business community ahead of the United Nations (UN) climate change conference in Copenhagen

Senior Campaigner, Friends of the Earth January 1999-April 2007

- Led campaign to reform UK Company Law so that it now places a legal duty on directors to “have regard” to environment, community and employee matters
- Led parliamentary advocacy on *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* – the legislation that now forms the basis of wildlife protection in the UK.

Endangered Species Campaigner, Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) (December 1995–January 1999)

- Managed two undercover investigations, one that exposed tiger bone for sale in Amsterdam and another that exposed trade in shahtoosh shawls in India, resulting in BBC TV documentary
- Encouraged Finland, Bulgaria and Jordan to co-propose amendment to the Appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to better protect European brown bears

Board and advisory roles:

- *Chair of Independent Challenge Group, Anglian Water (2021-present)*; bringing together NGOs, business and regulators to offer robust stakeholder challenge on climate and nature to multi-billion-pound business plan of one of UK’s largest water companies
- *Board member, Green Alliance*
- *Member of Sustainability Innovation Board, for Marks and Spencer (2020-2023)*
- *Chair of Board, Stakeholder Forum (2012-2015)* (previously Vice-Chair 2009-2012), successfully leading Board through difficult period of financial instability
- *Board member of Friends of the Earth Europe (2012-2018)*
- *Board member of Friends of the Earth International (2003-2007)*
- *Member of Kingfisher Plc Net Positive Board Advisory Council (2009-2014)*
- *Co-opted member of Board of Trade Justice Movement (TJM) (2003-2009)*
- *Corporate Responsibility (CORE) Coalition – Founder member, Steering Group (2000-2007)*

Education:

1994–1995: University College London
MSc in Nature Conservation

1991–1994: University of Reading
BSc (Hons) in Human and Physical Geography