

Brussels – 20 November 2015

# Nature Summit: hundreds gather in Brussels to decide on future of nature laws

**Campaigners from across Europe are arriving in Brussels to tell the European Commission to drop its attack on vital nature laws and focus on their enforcement.**

Conservationists, politicians and representatives of the EU institutions are today [Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November] attending the “Conference on the Fitness Check of EU Nature Legislation” organised by the European Commission in Brussels on the Birds and Habitats Directives, also known as the Nature Directives.

EU Environment Commissioner, Karmenu Vella, will outline the Commission’s first findings from the process so far, with more details given by his consultants who undertook the biggest ever evaluation of nature conservation legislation in Europe. The initial results will be discussed with panels composed of Member State officials, industry representatives, NGOs and MEPs.

It’s feared the Fitness Check of the laws, which is part of the Commission’s ‘REFIT’ agenda, will be used as an excuse to re-open and potentially weaken the legislation under the guise of ‘better regulation’.

But since the process began, the people of Europe have demonstrated an unprecedented show of support to protect nature. A record number of citizens took part in a public consultation on this issue in the summer, with over 90% of the more than a half a million who responded backing the directives and asking for stronger enforcement.

Last month, environment ministers from nine EU countries signed a letter to the Commission calling for the laws to be better implemented, not weakened. In the same week, an equally supportive letter followed from MEPs representing the seven biggest political groupings in the European Parliament.

A European Parliament draft report on the EU’s Biodiversity Strategy, presented earlier this month, also highlighted the importance of protecting the Nature Directives.

**Ariel Brunner, BirdLife Europe Senior Head of Policy, stated:** “*The Fitness Check evidence is crystal clear - the Birds and Habitat Directives are fit for purpose and there is no case for “merging and modernising” them. The Commission's first findings published last week also clearly show where the real problems lie: in poor and uneven enforcement, lack of funding and the impact of perverse policies such as the Agriculture Policy of the EU.*”

Campaigners from the conservation organisations behind the "Nature Alert" campaign to protect the directives (BirdLife Europe, EEB, Friends of the Earth and WWF) will be raising awareness outside the event and will also be represented amongst the speakers. Commission proposals on the future of the laws are expected by June 2016. **ENDS**

**For further information or to arrange interviews on the day at the event, please contact:**

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*Please note: Mike Clarke, chief executive of the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), is among the event's speakers and will also be available for interviews.*

**Notes:**

More information and live web-streaming of the "Conference on the Fitness Check of EU Nature Legislation" event is available here, along with the first findings published last week: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness\\_check/conference\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/conference_en.htm)  
(Twitter: #NatureFit4All)

More information on the Nature Alert campaign is available here: <http://www.birdlife.org/naturealert>

*BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 47 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.*