

Dear Colleague

As you know, towards the end of last year, we came under concerted attack from some quarters in the national press and from 'You Forgot the Birds' – a newly formed organisation linked to shooting interests and fronted by Sir Ian Botham.

'You Forgot the Birds' and the Countryside Alliance made separate formal complaints to the Charity Commission about our charitable work. Neither complaint has been upheld by the Charity Commission. Nor was the RSPB subject to any formal investigation.

The Charity Commission invested time in examining our processes and activities in the light of the complaints they received. And they are clear that we have not breached charitable regulations or guidelines, or our own charitable objectives, on any of the issues raised.

As a charity, we operate in an open and accountable manner, and will continue to do so.

You can read an article on the homepage of the RSPB website about the allegations, how we responded and what the Charity Commission has said and done. You can also read it in full below.

These challenges highlight the importance of the sound science and evidence which informs our work, the importance of our systems and ways of working, and the importance of our trustees and the fantastic support they give us. We know that certain interest groups and sections will continue to challenge and attempt to use the media to undermine us. This will not stop us from continuing to campaign for nature and speaking out against wildlife crime.

And, together, we will win - keep up the great work!

**Mike Clarke**  
Chief Executive

**Here is the article that is on the [RSPB website](#).** The two documents\*\* that it mentions are not included with this email - you'll be able to read them on the website:

'You may have seen that we have come under concerted attack from some quarters in the national press in recent months. You may also have read that the Countryside Alliance and 'You Forgot the Birds' - an organisation linked to shooting interests and fronted by Sir Ian Botham – made two formal complaints through the Charity Commission about our charitable work.

We felt it important you should know that neither complaint was upheld by the Charity Commission. We welcome the fact that these attacks have been systematically rejected. We will continue to play a proper role in campaigning for nature in the wider countryside and speaking out against wildlife crime.

The RSPB was not subject to a formal investigation, but the Charity Commission have invested time in examining our processes and activities in the light of the complaints. The Commission are clear that the RSPB has not breached charitable regulations or guidelines, or our own charitable objectives, on any of the issues raised.

The RSPB always seeks best practice, and we have welcomed the opportunity to learn all that we can from the guidance offered by our regulator. We were complimented by the Charity Commission for the speed and thoroughness of our uptake of their advice.

Transparency and accountability are important to us. So we wanted you to see for yourself the allegations, our response and the Charity Commission's ruling. We trust that this provides both confirmation and reassurance that the RSPB operates according to the highest standards.

Here are the formal complaints made by 'You Forgot the Birds' and the Countryside Alliance and Charity Commission responses in full.

- 'You Forgot the Birds' complaints response from Charity Commission (Nov 14)
- Countryside Alliance complaints response from Charity Commission (Jan 15)

These documents show clearly the challenges we face, the calibre of our responses and that the RSPB has nothing to hide.

We welcome scrutiny of our position and practices. We have a solid track record of results based on sound science and good governance. We will always robustly challenge unfounded allegations from unaccountable interests both via our regulators and through answering enquiries from the media.

Thanks to the support of people like you - our members, partners and supporters - the RSPB is an effective organisation. It is understandable that, when we challenge the actions of others, they will seek to undermine us.

As we forge ahead with our conservation work and grow support through our Giving Nature a Home Campaign, we are likely to face renewed challenges from particular interests. When we do, you can rest assured that the RSPB's activity will conform with the legislation and guidelines upheld by the Charity Commission (and its counterparts in Scotland and Northern Ireland) and with our charitable objects, which you can read here.

We have been both grateful for, and touched by, the support we have received from so many of you during this period. Globally, nationally and locally wildlife is in trouble. Someone has to be prepared to speak out for nature and, with your help, that is exactly what we are going to carry on doing.'