

**DR. CAROLINE LUCAS**  
Green Party

for the South East of England

Stavros Dimas  
DG Environment  
The European Commission  
B-1049 Brussels  
Belgium

June 27<sup>th</sup> 2005

Dear Commissioner,

As you may be aware, I have a long-standing interest in the plight of the Iberian lynx, and in January 2004 visited some of the lynx's remaining few habitats in Spain. I also corresponded with your predecessor about the EU taking decisive action to protect the species. The Iberian lynx is the most threatened cat species on earth and according to recent figures only 120 adult animals exist in the wild, compared with over 100,000 at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. You may be interested in my report 'The Iberian Lynx Emergency' which is available to download at [www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk](http://www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk)

The purpose of this letter is two fold: firstly to raise the issue of funding, and secondly to draw your attention to matters that may adversely affect the Commission's efforts to conserve habitats for the lynx. LIFE funding has been instrumental in supporting a number of projects that are concerned with protecting the Iberian lynx. The current grant is due to end in 2006 and I would encourage you to ensure that funds are made available again in the 2006-2011 round. There is evidence available that demonstrates how EU funded work is starting to make a real difference to the lynx population, and I hope that the Commission can recognise the value of ongoing initiatives in this field.

Alongside LIFE, Natura 2000 has also played an important role, by facilitating the protection of habitats that might otherwise be under threat. However, a number of areas which are vital for lynx breeding programmes have not been put forward by the Spanish government for inclusion in Natura 2000. Furthermore, some areas where Iberian lynx currently breed and hunt are being developed, putting even greater pressure on the dwindling numbers of animals. In Portugal and in Andalucia official Recovery Plans have not been approved, so developments that threaten the Iberian lynx continue unchecked. Of particular concern is the Odelouca dam, which the Portugese government is now confident will attract EU funding, despite it being found to breach the Habitats Directive.

This and similar activities combine to undermine the Commission's funding programme support for the conservation of the Iberian Lynx. Therefore, I urge you to place pressure on the Portugese and Andalucian authorities to comply with EU law and to implement Lynx Recovery Plans, whilst petitioning the Spanish government to ensure that sufficient areas are safeguarded under Natura 2000. I would also urge you to continue assessing the impact of the Odeluca dam and to withhold funding if it breaches EU legislation.

The European Union has the opportunity to use its considerable resources, power and expertise to ensure that Europe does not become the setting for what would be a conservation disaster - the first big cat extinction in modern times. Saving the Iberian lynx requires a European vision and a sense of ownership for a species which is endemic to our region and found nowhere else. I trust that the Environment Commission will do all it can to rise to this challenge, and I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.