

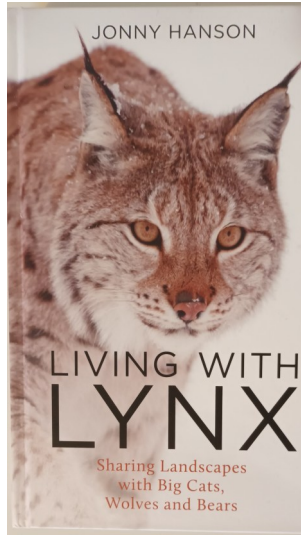


NVT Event 16 October 2025

6.30pm at the Union Jack Club, London SE1



Jonny Hanson © Jonny Hanson



Jonny Hanson's new book
© Jonny Hanson

Save the date in your diary, for the next Nyika-Vwaza Trust London event. This year our speaker will be Jonny Hanson, former trustee of NVT UK and an environmental social scientist who is studying whether we could and whether we should share our landscapes with apex predators such as lynx, wolves and bears. His book on that subject has just been published.

Jonny has much fascinating experience to share. He set up and managed Northern Ireland's first community farm. He was raised between Malawi and Ireland, and has a PhD in snow leopard conservation from the University of Cambridge. And he is developing his own conservation gin brand called Malawi Mountain[®] Gin.

In addition to having highly interesting subjects to talk about, he is a very entertaining speaker so please do make up your mind to come and listen to his talk.

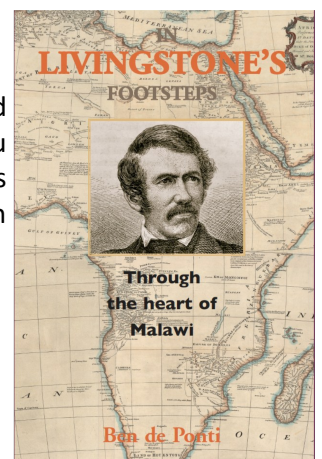
There will be a short update on Nyika-Vwaza UK Trust activities and time after Jonny's talk to network with old and new friends with an interest in Malawi.

Information about the event will be up on our website when we can confirm details: www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org/UJC-2025.html.

In Livingstone's footsteps

In 2007, Ben de Ponti followed David Livingstone's two expeditions (1861 and 1863) by foot and by boat. Ben worked in Mzuzu as a dental surgeon from 1976 to 1979 and found the Nyika plateau to be one of his favourite places. He visits Malawi around every two years and goes to his Memorial Rock on the Nyika to commemorate family and friends who had experienced Nyika with him, but have since passed away.

Livingstone's journeys were fascinating and Ben's travels no less so. You can read about them in Ben's 400- page book, which is illustrated by his wife. If you are interested to know more, contact him on b.deponti@kpnmail.nl.



Peter Lawrance – RIP

26th September 1950 – 5th December 2024

NVT Hon Secretary and Treasurer April 2012- Dec. 2024

It was with great sadness that we learned of Peter’s death in early December.

Peter was brought up in Sarawak, where his father was a government surveyor. His early life was exciting – living in a small riverside community without running water, relying on rainwater and a well, and cooking on an open fire. At this time Sarawak had very few roads so travel was mostly in open longboats, with stops at tribal longhouses. Peter was sent to school in England aged 8 – when visits home were once a year for the summer holiday. Peter enjoyed sport at Cheltenham, so school life had its compensations.

Peter read geography at Durham and then headed to London, joining Coopers Brothers as an articled clerk. Once qualified, Peter and his wife Jane set off to Zambia. In late 1976 he joined the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC).

After a short spell in London, Peter spent six months near Kasungu in Malawi working on a Smallholder Tobacco Scheme. This was Peter’s first exposure to Malawi. However, for Jane it was a coming home as she had been brought up in Malawi – her parents Jock and Bar Corrie, had served in pre and post-independence government service, and had a deep love of the country and its people.

The family returned to Malawi in early 1979, joining Roger Royle’s team at Smallholder Tea in Thyolo, and then to Smallholder Coffee in Mzuzu. Working with smallholder farmers involved trips into the beautiful mountain areas of Malawi. Life was not all work – Peter and the family enjoyed trips to their cottage on the shores of Lake Malawi and to the Nyika Plateau. After postings to the Solomon Islands and London, Peter joined Sable Farming in 1991. The family lived in Blantyre, renewing their ties to Malawi.



Peter and family on the Nyika plateau © Jane Lawrance

When Peter left CDC, he moved into consultancy, travelling widely in the Pacific, Caribbean and the European Union succession states.

Peter had a deep love of Malawi, and used his fine mind and skills to support its people – a legacy shared by three generations of his family.



*Peter relaxing on Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe
© Jane Lawrance*

As our Secretary and Treasurer for the last twelve years Peter was the lynch-pin that held our organisation together: handling our funding of programmes in Malawi as well as our finances in the UK and maintaining contact with our supporters. As one of our trustees commented: “Peter had an impressive career, but it was not just what he did that mattered, it was who he was.” We miss him enormously.

We offer our condolences to Jane, Clare, Laura and Sally and all the family.

Wildlife and Environmental Education Sourcebook for Primary Schools

By Dorothy Tembo-Nhlema, Director of programmes at the Lilongwe Wildlife Trust (LWT)

Malawi now has a comprehensive sourcebook on Wildlife and Environment for Primary Schools. This sourcebook provides a supplementary resource material for teachers when developing lessons for their classes, and is handy material for extracurricular activities including wildlife clubs.



*Learners pose during the leadership training
© LWT*

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From the time the book was published, launched, and teachers from selected schools trained on the use, LWT has been engaging various stakeholders to support re-printing of the book to ensure that most schools in the country have access and are using it. Out of more than 5,000 primary schools in Malawi, the first edition only reached 16 schools and the Secretary for Education, Dr Mangani Chilala Katundu recommended the printing of more books. German Cooperation and TUSK have supported the reprinting of 1,200 copies that will be distributed across a few schools, and teachers will be oriented. LWT will continue to engage stakeholders on the reprinting of the book.



Learners enjoying conservation experience at Kasungu National Park
© LWT

In March 2025, LWT in collaboration with DQAS and MIE planned to visit the 16 initial targeted schools to assess how the book has been used. The target is to talk to both the school learners and teachers to assess the rolling out of the book. Results of the assessment will be shared in April 2025.

Expanding Lilongwe Wildlife Trust's Environmental Education

LWT continues to implement The Lilongwe Wildlife Environmental Education Programme, aiming at expanding Lilongwe Wildlife Trust's Environmental Education. It's a unique project to strengthen and consolidate the existing experiences of Environmental Education, share and engage other educators in the country and increase the impact on school children, students and (aspiring) teachers of the environmental educational activities undertaken by the LWT EEC.

It is exciting that, in the last six months, the education team facilitated a learners' educational visit to Kasungu and Liwonde National Parks for them to have nature experience while improving their knowledge and skills in wildlife conservation and developing their abilities to become successful wildlife ambassadors. The learners were excited

with game drives that helped them to observe and understand the various animals' behaviours and their natural habitats. In the evening, the learners and teachers enjoyed campfire animal talks, where the park staff shared their experiences on the coexistence with wildlife. The teachers and learners had a beautiful experience and shared their sentiments below:

Ruth Mtambo, a teacher from Kauma Primary School, applauded education visits and said; *"The visits are paramount to build confidence in learners that they are indeed wildlife ambassadors. It is rare nowadays to see learners having school trips to protected areas and most of these learners have parents that cannot afford to take them there. This initiative has come at the right time when a lot of learners are always asking for visits to protected areas."*

The same sentiments were shared by Victor Sibale, from Central West Education Division. He said; *"The trips have reminded me of old days when we were taken to protected areas by schools, it is sad that these initiatives are not common nowadays, hence learners miss the opportunity to appreciate nature and gain vital information, these trips are the ones that helped us to love nature and we were willing to join wildlife services. We will offer you the needed support to make these trips easier to process."*

On behalf of the learners, Esnart Phiri from Mkomachi Community Day Secondary School said *'This trip has been a wonderful experience, and I have learnt a lot. It was my first time seeing all those animals. I have enjoyed it a lot and I really wish some of my friends can have the same opportunity. Given another opportunity, I will definitely come again.'*

Following the Best Experience meeting in May 2024 for different environmental educators across the country, Liwonde National Park invited the LWT education team to support the mentoring of learners from different schools who were undergoing an intensive conservation leadership program under Liwonde National Park. The conservation leadership program sought to build future conservationists who are bold enough to support conservation activities. The LWT team took a leading role in layout activities for the mentorship. The strength of the partnership originates from the best experience. In addition, this project has led to strong collaboration and partnerships such that Liwonde National Park has started giving entry waivers to primary schools.



Children during the Campfire in Liwonde National Park
© LWT

The Nyika-Vwaza Co-Management Trust

We are delighted to be able to update you on our cooperation with Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) and their conservation work on the Nyika Plateau and Vwaza Marsh. In our last two newsletters we explained that the Malawi Government has entered into a 20-year Co-Management agreement (CMA) with PPF and this will operate through the Nyika-Vwaza Co-Management Agreement Trust which will oversee all management activities within the parks and surrounding communities. Day-to-day management costs are assured for the next 20 years due to a significant endowment fund, contributions from the Malawi Government and grants from other bodies.

We, the Nyika-Vwaza UK Trust, have agreed a £150,000 grant to fund the post of Research Co-ordinator at the Co-Management Trust for the next three years. This post will be part of the senior management team. We felt this grant to be particularly appropriate due to our 10-year project to fund research grants at Nyika and Vwaza. All the results of these research studies have been made available to the new Research Co-ordinator.

It has just been confirmed that the Research Co-ordinator will be Andrew Kanzunguze, who we know well from his work in the north of Malawi and as someone who has carried out several of our funded research projects. His appointment is very good news and we have sent our congratulations to him.



Andrew Kanzunguze
©Andrew Kanzunguze

Lésa van Rooyen, PPF's marketing, communication and branding manager, adds more about Andrew and says that the Nyika Vwaza Co-Management Trust will lead with research. "With a master's degree in forestry and environmental management, and an MBA in leadership and management, focused on community engagement strategies, Andrew Kanzunguze has cultivated a strong foundation in research that

bridges technical expertise and strategic leadership to deliver actionable outcomes in conservation.

"His professional trajectory has seen him take on diverse roles in management, consulting, and research, which have sharpened his technical expertise and leadership skills towards spearheading notable projects. As a National Consultant, he has worked in Malawi's protected areas and adjoining agro-ecological systems, benchmarking the impacts of conservation initiatives in the Nyika-Vwaza landscape.

"As Research Coordinator for the Nyika Vwaza Co-Management Trust, Andrew is poised to lead research initiatives, advance evidence-based conservation efforts, foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders in the Nyika-Vwaza landscape and implement innovative solutions to ensure the sustainable management of the Nyika-Vwaza complex."

Lumbani Banda's research report

Lumbani Banda's report on his research study to 'Assess the Value of Bracken Fern Stands as Habitats for Reptile and Avian Communities at Nyika National Park', is complete and can be read in full on our website:

www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/Banda_BirdsReptilesBracken-Nyika_NVT-report-Jan2025.pdf

Findings of the study show that, for birds, bracken invasion is associated with lower species number and functional diversity, suggesting that bracken alters species composition. While bracken-invaded habitats may support some species, particularly mixed-feeding birds, the negative impacts seem to outweigh the benefits. For reptiles, the results were inconclusive, due to the low number of species recorded in both habitat types. However, the presence of a few species in bracken-invaded areas suggests these habitats may still offer resources or refuge for some reptiles. Based on these findings, the study recommends focusing conservation efforts on controlling bracken fern spread to protect species and functional diversity, especially amongst birds



Clockwise from left, Grey-bellied Grass Snake, Striped Skink Montane and Three-striped Skink

© Lumbani Banda

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When asked for some observations on his experience, Lumbani told us: "I was surprised, especially in changes of frequency of encounter of some species like the Churring Cisticola. The observation that, as we were getting closer to low altitude forest, we saw less and less of the species was interesting. While, as we went upwards in altitude, the frequency of the species increased greatly. This contrast was particularly interesting as it felt like one can draw a wave of the distribution of the species. I was also surprised by the few snake species that we observed. Given that we were in the bush one would expect to observe more species but unfortunately we didn't. I was pleased by the landscapes - the ability to see far without using a pair of binoculars was amazing. The beautiful landscapes provided a sense of tranquillity and were a great way to relax by simply observing them. In addition, I was pleased by the juniper forest, as it was my first visit to the forest. Seeing the tall trees, so much so that when you're inside the forest you can't see the tops of them, was exciting. The main challenges were navigating the slippery tough roads and dense thickets of bracken fern. Sampling at night was also challenging especially considering the low night temperatures." When commenting on the challenges, Lumbani shared a very relevant saying: "Rough roads lead to beautiful destinations".



Lumbani Banda and
Nyson Gawani
© Lumbani Banda



Laston Kachedzula,
Lumbani Banda and
Nyson Gawani
© Lumbani Banda

Gracious Lokoma awarded research grant

The most recent research proposal to be accepted and funded by NVT UK is from Gracious Lokoma and its subject is 'Avian-flora interactions: investigating the role of fruiting plants in shaping the distribution and diversity of significant ecotourism bird species in Nyika National Park'. The main object of the project is to reveal crucial ecological insights into the correlation between the presence of prolific touristic bird species and the seasonal production of fruiting plants in Nyika National Park.

In its first phase, Gracious will engage with stakeholders to create a list of priority bird species with high attraction for tourists. In phase two, he will investigate the ecological patterns of these birds' interactions with fruiting plants. The final phase will capture images of birds feeding on the fruits of various plants and those plants identified. The information will be mapped with GPS data that will enable tourists to locate bird species in different seasons. These ecotourism maps, highlighting the distribution of fruiting plants and their associated avian populations, will be valuable resources for tourism operators in Nyika National Park, including Central African Wilderness Safaris (CAWS). It is intended to enhance the tourist experience, while ensuring the park's natural resources are conserved.

This research will cover all seasons in the year from May 2025 to May 2026.

Gracious has BSc in Forestry and Environmental Management from Mzuzu University. Asked about his thoughts on the forthcoming research he told us:

"I am looking forward to exploring the fascinating world of avian-flora interactions and how their ecological links shape the distribution and diversity of bird species in Nyika National Park. I also look forward to using GPS data and mapping techniques to visualise and analyse these interactions. I am eager to utilise biological data on feeding relationships between birds and fruiting plants to gain a deeper understanding of these interactions, specifically their implications for tourism and area management.

"I anticipate several challenges during this research. One of the main challenges will be collecting and analysing data on bird species and fruiting plants in Nyika National Park which may require extensive field surveys. Additionally, I may face challenges in balancing the needs and expectations of different stakeholders, including conservationists, policymakers and tourism operators, all in a single report. Time management will also be crucial, as the ecological unit area is vast and requires careful planning and coordination of activities to ensure that data collection and analysis are completed within the designated timeframe.

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“This subject interests me because I am passionate about conservation biology and ecology. I believe that understanding avian-flora interactions is crucial for conserving biodiversity in Nyika National Park. I am also fascinated by the intricate relationships between birds and plants and how these interactions shape the structure and function of wild ecosystems. Furthermore, I am drawn to this subject because of its potential to promote green economy through enhancing sustainable tourism practices in the park and also to inform effective conservation strategies which may ultimately contribute to the protection of the park’s unique biodiversity.”

We greatly look forward to the results of Gracious Lokoma’s research.



Gracious Lokoma
© Gracious Lokoma

PPF Nyika Vwaza Co-Management Trust

It is exciting to hear that the board and CEO of the Nyika-Vwaza Co-Management Trust is now in place. We thought you would like to know who they are, as we know some of them well and you might too. PPF Marketing, Communications and Branding Manager, Lésa van Rooyen provided us with the following details.

The PPF Nyika Vwaza Co-Management Trust welcomes new CEO - *George Nxumayo*

In Malawi, Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve, form a critical landscape in the Malawi-Zambia Transfrontier Conservation Area, with the biodiverse Nyika Plateau providing 10% of the water to Lake Malawi. After the signing in June 2023 of a co-management agreement between Peace Parks and the Malawi Government for the

sustainable development of the landscape, all efforts are now focused on the establishment of the Nyika-Vwaza Co-Management Trust which will manage the landscape. In June 2024, the board of Trustees was established. More recently, the Trust Chief Executive Officer (CEO), M. George Nxumayo, has been appointed. It marks an important milestone in the development and protection of the landscape. With a wealth of experience in conservation management in the region, Nxumayo has a clear vision for the future, grounded in conservation, community engagement, effective collaboration, and eco-friendly tourism.

Having grown up in the area, Nxumayo understands the challenges and potential of the region which faces growing pressure from human activities. Balancing the need for natural resources conservation, sustainable economic development and supporting communities with alternate income streams such as employment, requires a multi-faceted approach.

Nxumayo is optimistic about the future of the Nyika-Vwaza Co-Management Trust. The groundwork laid by previous conservation efforts such as the 20-year partnership between Malawi’s Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) and Peace Parks Foundation, has created a positive foundation upon which to build. The support from stakeholders, including the government and the political community, is evident.

“The excitement from the community and stakeholders gives me hope,” he says. “It’s about setting realistic expectations and making sure that everyone understands the value of conservation for the long term.” With strong leadership, strategic planning, and a clear vision, Nxumayo is confident that the Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve can thrive as both a critical biodiversity hotspot and a sustainable development model.

A Board to be reckoned with

The Nyika-Vwaza Co-Management Trust governance is founded on a Board of Trustees and a Park Management Unit led by the CEO. The Board of Trustees will provide strategic oversight and guidance to the Park Management Unit to protect, restore, and develop Malawi's Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve, ensuring sustainable conservation and community development remain at the heart of all endeavours.

Board Chairperson

Justice Edward Twea, JA, SC (Rtd) is a retired Justice of Appeal at the Supreme Court of Malawi, bringing over 41 years of distinguished legal experience both on and off the bench. Throughout his career, he has been dedicated to the

(Continued on page 7)

promotion of law, legal and judicial reform, as well as the protection of child and human rights. His esteemed career includes roles as a Supreme Court Judge, High Court Judge, and Judge President.

Board Members

Dr. Francis Mkanda is a Natural Resources Management specialist with more than 40 years of experience. He began his career in the Malawi Department of National Parks in 1983 and later worked with international organisations such as UNDP, IUCN ROSA, Peace Parks and the African Wildlife Fund.

Dr. Tiwonge Mzumara is an ornithologist and passionate bird enthusiast. She began her career with BirdLife International in 2006, after completing her graduate studies, and then joined the Museums of Malawi as an ornithologist. She currently serves as a Lecturer at Malawi University of Science & Technology and is the National Chairperson of the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi.

Chris Badger is the Managing Director of Central African Wilderness Safaris, a role he has held since 1987. With over 40 years of experience in the safari and conservation sectors, he is a visionary leader renowned for pioneering eco-tourism initiatives and managing conservation projects across Africa. He currently manages Chelinda Lodge in Nyika National Park.

Benedicto Mwakilama is a Chartered Accountant and Independent Auditor with 29 years of professional experience with reputable firms like PWC and KPMG.

Paramount Chief Chikulamayembe. As the senior-most traditional leader, Paramount Chief Chikulamayembe oversees the communities of Rumphu South and the eastern side of Nyika National Park. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Nyika Vwaza Association for Natural Resources and Development, playing a vital role in the integration of traditional leadership with conservation efforts.

Senior Chief Mpherembe is the Chairperson of the Nyika-Vwaza Association Board of Trustees. A dedicated traditional leader, he has been part of the board since its formation in 2005 and represents the communities in the Mzimba area of the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve buffer zone.

Brighton Kumchedwa is the Director of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) in Malawi, with over 33 years of experience in wildlife management, extension, and education. His expertise includes fostering co-management initiatives that support wildlife conservation across the country.

Ghislain Rieb is the Senior Programme Manager for Peace Parks Foundation's most northern landscapes. With strong experience in conservation and project management, he has successfully led various initiatives in transboundary landscapes both within and outside protected areas, focusing on finance, design, implementation, and monitoring.

Prof. Andrew Nambota is the Regional Manager for Northern Transfrontier Conservation Areas at Peace Parks Foundation. A distinguished veterinarian with over two decades of expertise in livestock disease control, animal production, and herd health, he has played a critical role in establishing transboundary areas, including the Malawi-Zambia landscape.

Chizamsoka Manda is the Malawi Country Representative for Peace Parks Foundation and a wildlife management professional with 27 years of experience in the sector. Having previously served as the Deputy Director of Conservation at DNPW, he played a significant role in establishing the Malawi-Zambia transboundary landscape and managing Nyika National Park.

Ex-Officio Board Members

Macmillan Magomero serves as the District Commissioner for Chitipa District Council. He oversees development and administrative matters within the district, contributing to the growth and sustainability of the region.

Frank Mkandawire is the District Commissioner for Karonga District Council. His role focuses on similar administrative and development functions across the district, ensuring the welfare of local communities.

Rodney Simwaka has nearly 28 years of experience in both the public and private sectors. As the District Commissioner for Mzimba District Council, he plays a key role in the administration of the district and served as the Coordinator for the German Development-supported Border Zone Development project in the early 2000s.

Emmanuel Bulukutu serves as the District Commissioner for Rumphu District. With 23 years of experience in the public sector, he is deeply committed to development, including conservation efforts, and works to improve the quality of life for local communities.

Donations appreciated

As you will have read in this newsletter, our funds have helped LWT produce an excellent sourcebook in support of including conservation on the primary schools curriculum. We continue to offer grants for research projects. Now we are embarking on the ambitious programme of funding a research coordinator as part of the Peace Parks Foundation's Co-Management Agreement with the Malawi Government. This will help to ensure appropriate information is established as a resource to help guide the management of the Nyika National Park and the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. Our funds continue to be well used and donations are very much appreciated.

We are most grateful to all of you who have already made donations and hope that this newsletter will encourage others of you to support this important work. You can find a donation form at the end of this newsletter, or you can make a direct donation to the Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust account at Lloyds Bank, sort code 309089, account number 44504860, IBAN GB94LOYD30908944504860

A very big 'thank you' for your support.

Editor: Jennie Kettlewell

Designer: Mike Budgen

Order Form for Guide to Nyika National Park

To order "Nyika – A Guide to the Nyika National Park, Malawi", payment can be made by £sterling cheque (made out to Nyika-Vwaza Trust), or direct to NVT's UK bank – see details below.

Prices:

UK: £20, incl. p&p, direct to the Trust's account at Lloyds Bank, sort code 30-90-89, account number 44504860

Overseas: direct to Lloyds Bank plc account (IBAN GB94LOYD30908944504860), account name The Nyika-Vwaza UK Trust, or by banker's draft) £28, including p&p.

We rely on donations to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust to fund our programmes, so please consider adding a donation to the amount you are paying for the guide.

Please complete the following:

I would like copies of the book, "Nyika – A Guide to the Nyika National Park, Malawi."

I would like to add a donation of £.....

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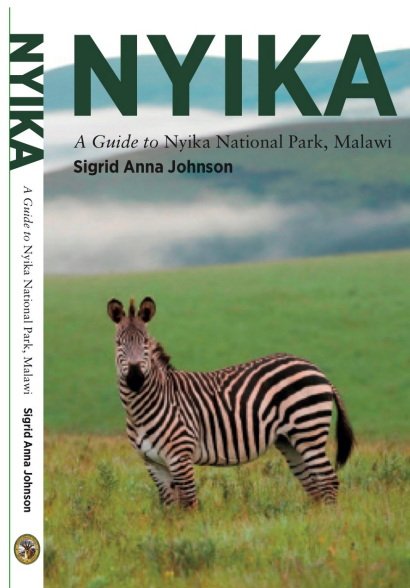
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Hon. Treasurer, Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust

72 North Street,

Biddenden, Kent, TN27 8AS, UK



The Nyika Guide
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The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust
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Working for environmental and wildlife conservation in northern Malawi.

Email: info@nyika-vwaza-trust.org
Website: www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org

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44504860, the sum of:

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Alternatively you may set up a standing order direct with your bank and advise us of your arrangement by email to

Friends of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust

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Or: I have completed the Banker's Order Form.

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I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008.

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