

The Rt. Hon Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park  
Minister of State for Pacific and the Environment  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
2 Marsham Street, London  
London  
SW1P 4DF

**15 March 2021**

Dear Lord Goldsmith,

### **Support for a legally binding tree target**

We welcome your Department's proactive approach to prioritise tree planting as part of its renewed efforts to protect and enhance the environment.

As a group of organisations, we are strongly supportive of the UK's net zero commitments and believe tree planting is integral to tackling the climate crisis. Despite this, only 13% of the UK is forested, compared to an EU average of 38%.

Although the Government has committed to planting 30,000ha of tree cover per year, without supporting this commitment through binding legislation, we are concerned that the UK's opportunity to demonstrate a world leading commitment to afforestation and broader nature-based solutions ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) will fall short. Experience shows that when targets are not enshrined in law, they lack credibility and are too often missed. In England alone, you will know that we fell 71% short of targets in planting trees in the year to March 2019. We can, and must, do better.

We believe tree planting targets should be enshrined in UK laws. The publication of the Environmental Bill and England Tree Strategy present an opportunity to do this.

Legally binding targets would help elevate our tree planting ambitions, and mobilise the investment and action needed to expand and protect our

woodlands so we meet the recommendations set out in the Climate Change Committee's recent 6th Carbon Budget.

As signatories, we believe a legally binding target that considers best sustainable practices in urban and rural tree planting could help increase biodiversity, reconnect people with nature and deliver on our net zero targets.

Given the UK's Presidency of COP26 this year, we hope your Department will show domestic leadership by enshrining tree planting targets in legislation.

**This letter has been sent to you from the following organisations:**

