



The Rt Hon Lord Zac Goldsmith  
Minister of State for Pacific and the Environment  
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs  
Seacole Building, 2 Marsham St, Westminster, London SW1P 4DF

6th October 2020

Dear Lord Goldsmith,

We welcome the recent consultation on the draft England Tree Strategy, but without any targets for increasing tree cover in England we do not believe it will deliver the changes necessary in a time of climate and ecological emergency.

The measures proposed would only increase England's woodland cover from 10% today to just 12% by 2050 – we can and must do better.

Well-managed trees and woods should be a vital part of a green recovery post-coronavirus, creating new jobs in conservation and forestry, plus giving more people access to thriving nature.

Recognising there are many competing priorities for land use, for example restoring precious peatlands, we must ensure the right trees are planted in the right place, for the right reason. Woodland creation should deliver multiple benefits, such as flood risk management and nature recovery. It should also fit in with local priorities including national strategies on biodiversity, land management and biosecurity.

Signatories to this letter are seeking to help tackle the climate and biodiversity crises. The water industry has committed to planting 11m trees by 2030. Friends of the Earth has been working with councils, landowners and the wider public to build support for increasing UK tree cover.

To support these objectives, and a broader national increase in tree cover, we urgently need the government to address the barriers that constrain woodland creation – particularly around the efficient deployment of different funding sources. This includes:

- Providing an income to landowners who plant trees on farmland at an attractive rate for uptake
- Changing the presumption not to plant trees in national parks, and allow for natural regeneration in the uplands
- Investing in nurseries and growing the native tree supply line in the UK
- Ensuring a step change over the short term by directly funding planting costs to generate an increase in tree planting this autumn

As well as removing the constraints that currently hinder the expansion of England's tree cover, the government must also avoid inappropriate planting that can lead to the loss of other habitats and land uses, including peatland.

There is much more work for all of us to do. But it starts by setting out a bold ambition. We urge the government to use the England Tree Strategy to set a clear and ambitious target to double England's tree cover.

Yours sincerely,

Christine McGourty  
CEO, WaterUK

Miriam Turner & Hugh Knowles  
Co-CEOs, Friends of the Earth  
(England, Wales & Northern Ireland)