

Rt Hon Mary Creagh MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

cc Baroness Sue Hayman

25th February 2025

Dear Minister,

We are writing to express our concern regarding the future of government funding for Nature for Climate fund and urban tree planting.

The Nature for Climate Fund has supported critical initiatives - including tree planting and peatland restoration - that provide long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits. This funding has enabled the expansion of green spaces, improved biodiversity, enhanced climate resilience, and fostered community engagement across the country. Projects supported by the fund have played a key role in restoring degraded landscapes, increasing tree cover in both urban and rural areas.

Indeed, the Forestry Commission's report on Key Performance indicators for 2023-2024 has noted that the "area of tree cover outside woodland in England" is improving. In this period, 546,000 trees – or 982 hectares – were planted outside woodland; 110,000 of which were funded by the Local Authority Treescape Fund (LATF) and 17,000 by the Urban Tree Challenge fund. And that's just for 2023-2024; since 2021 over 1800 hectares of urban trees have been planted with Government support.

One of the Fund's greatest strengths is its ability to support projects that benefit the most vulnerable communities, often in urban areas. Many initiatives have targeted areas with limited access to high-quality green space, addressing environmental inequalities while also contributing to improved mental and physical well-being. The creation of green infrastructure in urban environments has been particularly impactful.

One example of the Fund's impact is Earthwatch Europe's work through the LATF. To date, Earthwatch has collaborated with 50 local authorities to plant 100 Tiny Forests across the UK. These densely planted, fast-growing woodlands provide vital environmental benefits in urban areas, improving air quality, supporting biodiversity, and helping communities reconnect with nature. Through this initiative, thousands of individuals have been engaged in citizen science, tree care, and educational activities, further enhancing the social value of the project.

Earthwatch's experience with LATF is just one example of the positive impacts that the Nature for Climate Fund has had through the work of our co-signatories and others.

The success of Nature for Climate Fund projects has also attracted significant co-investment from corporate and philanthropic partners, amplifying the impact of Government funding. Moreover, these initiatives have generated widespread public support and media attention, demonstrating their value to society as a whole. Government funding also plays a crucial role helping to secure existing jobs and grow the voluntary sector more widely, including through advisors and contractors, with excellent economic benefits.

A decision over the future of funding of trees outside woodlands, peatland restoration and other activities that will help our resilience in the face of climate change is currently on hold. If a decision about the current year's funding is not taken soon, it will be too late in the year to plant in the next season, and an entire year's worth of projects will have to be cancelled or delayed. This will be a huge setback for the programme, and intensely disappointing to those who have lined up projects across the country.

We welcome the Government's stated commitment to nature recovery and climate action. The Nature for Climate Fund has been instrumental in advancing these priorities, delivering proven benefits at excellent value for money. We urge you to reaffirm this commitment by securing funding for the coming year without delay, ensuring that planned projects can move forward and continue delivering lasting environmental and social benefits.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harry Barton', with a stylized, cursive script.

Harry Barton, Chief Executive, **Earthwatch Europe**

Signed on behalf of

Kit Stoner, Chief Executive, **Bat Conservation Trust**

Alison White, Co-founder, **Canopy**

Penny Tarrant, Chair, **Plymouth Tree People**

Linda Phillips MBE, Director, **Roots and Shoots**

Kevin Austin, Director of Policy and Advocacy, **RSPB**

Sara Lom, Chief Executive, **The Tree Council**

Joan Edwards, Director Policy and Public Affairs, **The Wildlife Trusts**

Darren Moorcroft, Chief Executive, **Woodland Trust**

Dr Roz Savage, MP

Cllr. Richard Silvester, Executive Cabinet Member, Climate Change and Environment, **Bolton Council**

Simon Cridland, **Bracknell Forest Council**

Chris Styles, Head of Planning Policy and Environment, **Coventry City Council**

Shaun Turner, Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change, **Lancashire County Council**

Cllr. Andrea Berardi, **Runnymede Borough Council**

Anna Fjortoft, Biodiversity Officer, **Spelthorne Borough Council**

Anthony Pearce, Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, **Stafford Borough Council**

Giles Archibald, Cabinet Member for Climate, Biodiversity and Environmental Services, **Westmorland and Furness Council**