

The Rt Lord Zac Goldsmith of Richmond
Minister of State (Minister for Pacific and the Environment)
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

CC: The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng, Minister of State; The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MHCLG; the CCC

Dear Lord Goldsmith,

We are writing to you regarding the current consultation on England's Tree Strategy. As a group of professionals working in the construction industry, we praise the Government's engagement with the topic. We recognise the effort placed in coordinating the timely consultation and express an interest in helping deliver a strategy. We believe it has the potential to be a significant achievement for the department, government and the British public. We feel the strategy could greatly aid the construction industry to meet the target of net-zero carbon set by the government as well as restore biodiversity lost through rural and urban developments. We believe the two main areas of direct concern to the construction industry in light of the Climate and Ecological Emergency to be **the responsible harvesting of homegrown timber for use in construction** and **increasing biodiversity within towns and cities**. Please note that due to the structure of the consultation, we have prepared limited additional material to express our shared concerns.

Although the strategy draws significant attention to working woodlands, there are few commitments to supporting the adoption of woodland products in the document. Responsible working woodlands will be central to reforms required in the construction industry to meet the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. We believe that the government should **make firm commitments to building publicly funded and partnered buildings with homegrown timber** to give confidence to nurseries, foresters and construction supply chains of future demand. The environmental impact of construction and the built environment is extensive; accounting for around 40% of the UK's carbon emissions. In light of the IPCC's recommendation that global emissions need to be halved by 2030, it is vital that industry regulation is commensurate with the significant share of emissions that the sector is responsible for including regulations on the types of materials from which buildings are constructed. We are concerned that the strategy **promotes tree planting as a means of carbon offsetting for polluting companies**, and strongly believe this should not be the primary purpose of planting. The strategy also makes **no firm commitment to measuring, retaining and increasing the biodiversity of working woodlands**.

Despite the extensive research findings published in support of tree planting within urban areas, little commitment is made within the England Tree Strategy to plant in our towns and cities. We believe the government must **recognise the role that trees play in building resilience to climate change** in English towns and cities, as green spaces are proven to lessen the Urban Heat Island effect. We are concerned that the plans emphasise **aesthetics over increased biodiversity** and, crucially, we believe the **physical and psychological benefits of living with trees must be leveraged in communities that need them most**.

We commend the interdisciplinary nature of the strategy, and we recognise that these concerns can not be addressed by yourself and the department alone, rather that a wide range of groups and individuals are needed for significant commitments to be made within parliament. We are aware that a number of meetings are planned within DEFRA and MHCLG regarding the consultation and we would request the presence of ACAN and AD. Please see a concise and detailed list of our requested commitments overleaf, endorsed by relevant professionals. We believe the strategy has great potential to improve wellbeing in our communities, catalyse the growth of the woodland industry in England and enable the construction sector in its goal to reach net-zero carbon.

Yours Sincerely,

Architects Climate Action Network (a network of over 1000 individuals)

together with, the Steering Group of **Construction Declares** (representing over 1500 UK construction industry businesses)

With support from:

dRMM Architects, <http://drmm.co.uk/>

Landscape for Future, <https://www.landscapeforfuture.org.uk/>

Paul Wood, street tree expert and author of 'London's Street Trees', 'London is a Forest' and the 'Great Trees of London Map'. <https://thestreettree.com/>

Sarah Wyndham Lewis, bee expert and author of 'Planting for Honeybees: The Grower's Guide to Creating a Buzz' and co-founder of Bermondsey St Bees, a Sustainable Beekeeping Practice and 2019's Sustainable Food SME of the Year. <https://www.bermondseystreetbees.co.uk/>

TreeTalk, <https://www.treetalk.co.uk/>

Waugh Thistleton Architects, <http://waughthistleton.com/>

(Refer to ACAN website for a list of further supporting signatures www.architectscan.org)