



Industry coalition calls for long-term investment in the UK's green infrastructure

22 September 2026

The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) and the Gardens Trust have brought together a coalition of organisations across the horticulture and landscape sectors to call on the government to make long-term investment in the UK's green infrastructure a national priority.

In a joint letter to the Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the organisations say trees, plants, gardens and parks should be recognised as essential infrastructure and part of the policy solution to some of the UK's biggest economic, environmental and community challenges.

The call comes as green spaces, climate resilience and the future of the UK's towns and cities take centre stage at both organisations' flagship conferences this week.

The coalition says this summer's record-breaking heatwaves, drought conditions and water restrictions have reinforced the need for a more strategic approach to planning, funding and maintaining the UK's green infrastructure.

The call is supported by evidence in the HTA's new Value of Green Spaces report, which is being shared with media under embargo ahead of its publication on Thursday 24 September. The report examines the economic, environmental and health contribution of green spaces and sets out a wider case for treating them as essential national infrastructure.

The organisations are calling on the government to:

- establish a cross-departmental group to coordinate policy on green spaces across housing, health, environment and economic growth, building on the work of the previous Green Spaces Taskforce;

- work with industry to deliver a long-term Water Resilience Strategy, focused on protecting and storing water and investing in rainwater harvesting, storage and irrigation infrastructure to improve water security and reduce the need for summer water restrictions;
- integrate high-quality green infrastructure into new and existing towns and developments, including building rainwater storage into new homes as part of the Government's housebuilding programme; and
- increase and ringfence funding for the long-term maintenance of green spaces, ensuring parks, gardens and street trees are properly cared for and can continue to deliver environmental and community benefits.

Fran Barnes, Chief Executive of the Horticultural Trades Association, said:

“Green spaces are not a nice-to-have. They are essential infrastructure. They deliver for our economy, our environment and the health and wellbeing of our communities. This summer has shown just how exposed our towns and cities are to extreme heat, drought and water shortages, and we cannot keep responding to these pressures year by year.

“The government has an opportunity now to put green infrastructure at the heart of how we plan and invest in the future – from building new homes and managing water to creating healthier communities and adapting to a changing climate. That means joining up policy across government, investing in water resilience and making sure green spaces are properly funded and maintained for the long term.

“Our message is clear: green spaces need to be planned, funded and valued as infrastructure from the outset, not added as an afterthought. The organisations behind this letter are ready to work with policymakers to make that happen.”

John Watkins, Chair of the Gardens Trust, said:

“Our nation has understood the value of greenspace for hundreds of years and has consequently created a wealth of parks and gardens, which are both beautiful and much-cherished by the millions of people who use them. Now it is time for this generation to step up and not only care for but grow this legacy, for the benefit of our environment, nature, today’s communities and the generations to come.”

The timing of the letter reflects a shared focus across both organisations' conferences this week.

At Horticulture, The Conference, the HTA will bring together industry leaders to discuss climate resilience, water security and sustainable economic growth.

Meanwhile, the Gardens Trust's New Town Landscapes Conference will explore how high-quality parks, gardens and landscapes have shaped successful communities, and what those lessons mean as the government accelerates housebuilding across England.

Together, the coalition is calling for green infrastructure to be planned, funded and maintained as essential infrastructure, alongside the other assets needed to create resilient communities, support nature and deliver long-term economic growth.

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Notes for Editors

Media Office - media.office@hta.org.uk

The joint letter has been sent to the Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The HTA's Value of Green Spaces report will be published at 11.30am on Thursday 24 September 2026. The report is available to the media under embargo ahead of publication.

The Gardens Trust conference - New Town Landscapes: Learning from the Past, Shaping the Future – will be held in at MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, on Wednesday September 23 and Thursday 24 and will focus on how lessons from the past can meaningfully shape future planning, design, governance, and community life.

Signatories and supporters include:

Horticultural Trades Association (HTA)
The Gardens Trust
Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)
British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI)
Landscape Institute (separate letter submitted)

About the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA)

The HTA is the leading trade association representing and supporting businesses in the UK garden industry. With a membership comprising retailers, growers, manufacturers, wholesalers, landscapers and garden designers, the HTA actively advocates for the sector, fostering growth, sustainability, and innovation.

The HTA is also a member of the AIPH, European Nurserystock Association (ENA), European Forestry Nursery Association (EFNA), Union Fleurs and Growing Media Europe (GME).
www.hta.org.uk

About the Gardens Trust

The Gardens Trust is the only UK national charity dedicated to protecting and conserving our heritage of designed landscapes.

It campaigns on their behalf, undertakes research and conservation work, and encourages public appreciation and involvement. Through the national network of County and Country Garden Trusts, it has access to people and local expertise throughout the country, bringing together people from all backgrounds who are united by a love and concern for historic parks, gardens and designed landscapes.

The Gardens Trust is also a membership organisation which relies on members and donors to support its work.

For further information, go to www.thegardenstrust.org