Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP
Secretary of State
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House, Tothill St
Westminster, London
SW1H 9NA

November 26th, 2026

Dear Secretary of State McFadden,

I am writing to you from the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) and the undersigned to welcome the publication of the Milburn Review on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). We wish to put on record our commitment to work with your and other departments to put the review's recommendations into practice by opening up routes into work and training in the UK's world class environmental horticulture industry and its associated professions.

We represent an industry that impacts positively on all aspects of daily life in the UK. It is worth over £38 billion to the UK economy, supports around 722,000 jobs and contributes £8.4bn of tax revenues to government. The landscape sector alone contributes £25 billion, and accounts for 373,000 jobs and 54,000 businesses.

Our sectors and professions have much to offer that aligns with the recommendations of the report including a variety of entry-level roles, apprenticeship schemes, further education opportunities at land-based colleges, and wider health benefits through the use of therapeutic environmental horticulture. More generally, the mental and physical health benefits gained through working outdoors and with nature, are widely known and accepted.

Over the last ten years, industry careers and skills initiatives such as GoLandscape and Grow Careers have sought to highlight the opportunities in the landscaping and horticultural sectors. However, the sector remains relatively low profile, and this has proven a barrier to growth. Recruiting young people has been a particular challenge and the average age of new entrants to the industry continues to rise. The landscape, horticulture and environmental sectors are working to support government in addressing the challenge of NEETs through the upcoming Horticultural Sector Growth Plan. We welcome the plan recognising the contribution of the design, planning and management professions, and are keen to see cross departmental collaboration to ensure its success and our objectives to support young people entering work or training in the sector.

Employers are willing to provide the skills and training for those with the enthusiasm and commitment for the sector. It is welcome, therefore, to see the review concluding that apprenticeships must be the greatest education and skills priority, a view that we echo. Apprenticeships offer unique opportunities for businesses to train the staff they need and offer

not only practical skills for young people, but vital interpersonal skills which are key to the long-term success of a person in the workforce. Our industry and professions stand ready to meet the challenge and to partner with government to deliver opportunity and potential to young people who, at the moment, do not see either.

We would be delighted to invite your officials to see at first hand the breadth of opportunity that our sectors and professions have to offer. From landscape architecture, design and planning, to commercial landscape construction, urban greening, sustainable plant production and environmental management and maintenance, our sectors have the desire to lead on this important issue and is well-placed to deliver across numerous objectives set out in the report.

The landscape, and environmental horticulture sector offers young people the opportunity to be instrumental in the place-making of their communities, as well as longer term care (place-keeping). The planning, ongoing care and stewardship of greenspaces including historic parks and gardens, town and city centres, nature reserves, and our homes and gardens embeds young people in their communities as well as supporting other sectors including tourism and hospitality. The work done by our sectors and professions can support young people entering the workforce, learning new skills, whilst improving the communities they live in and build space for social, environmental, and physical health.

Thank you for your time and commitment to creating opportunities for young people across the UK. We look forward to welcoming you to come and see how our iconic landscapes, parks and green spaces, and those who design, build and care for them, can deliver vital growth for nature, places, and young people.

Yours sincerely,

Wayne Grills, Chief Executive of the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI)

Alan Carter, CEO of the Land Trust

John Watkins, Chair of The Gardens Trust

Nick Juba, CEO at Lantra

Helen Sessions CHort MCIHort, External Relations of Chartered Institute of Horticulture

Martin Emmett, Chair of the Environmental Horticulture Group Skills and Education Subgroup

Ed Stannard, Executive Director of Parks for London

Fran Barnes, Chief Executive of the Horticultural Trade Association (HTA)

Robert Hughes, CEO of The Landscape Institute (LI)

Alex Payne, Chief Executive at Landex (Land Based Colleges & Universities Aspiring to Excellence)