



Horticulture House
Chilton
Didcot
Oxfordshire OX11 0RN

T 0333 003 3550
E info@hta.org.uk
W hta.org.uk

Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Rd
London SW1A 2HQ

20th September 2022

Dear Chancellor,

I write to you on behalf of the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) and its members representing 1500 businesses from the breadth of the UK's Horticulture and Gardening industry. We congratulate you on your appointment and our industry looks forward to working with you and your team.

The Horticulture and Gardening sector is the original 'green industry'. We make a hugely positive difference to communities up and down the country providing employment, boosting health and well-being, actively enhancing the environment and delivering sustainability goals.

Ornamental (Environmental) Horticulture in the UK:

- Employs 674,200 people
- Contributes £28.8 billion in GDP
- Generates £6.3 billion in tax revenue
- Underwrites 50% of the UK's 25-year Environmental Plan
- Provides physical and mental health benefits

Ahead of the anticipated fiscal event we are calling on the Government to act to support horticulture businesses as they face a cost of doing business crisis, including energy costs and labour shortages, these are businesses also being directly affected by the recent drought, trade and border disruption, regulatory pressures and deadlines such as the 2024 peat ban, declining footfall and consumer confidence relating to cost of living.

The importance of our industry came to the fore during the pandemic and we remain ambitious that in this time of great economic uncertainty, this budget is an opportunity to support economic growth in our industry with substantial benefits for the UK economy and communities, including many remote and rural areas.

Cost of doing business and stabilising consumer confidence measures:

- Urgent clarity on the announced energy price cap for business to understand the real impact; and security and certainty to businesses on energy costs until at least end-2023 with ambition for a longer outlook.
- Immediate relief on business rates, and reduction until an improved calculation can be implemented.
- Cut VAT to boost consumer confidence.
- Reduce the cost of National Insurance Contributions so that horticulture businesses can employ more people – particularly in rural areas. Making it more appealing to retain skills in parts of the UK where this is currently a challenge – this will support the levelling up agenda.
- Delay or relief from the Apprenticeship Levy and increase the flexibility of use of Levy funds to support training, upskilling and assessment costs.

Horticulture specific measures:

- Make access to grants more readily available for reservoirs and technology (particularly given the impact of this summer's drought and hosepipe ban). For example ensuring the Farming Investment Grant is fully inclusive and accessible to the horticulture industry.
- Invest in automation and allow a long-term seasonal workers scheme for growers as outlined in the recent *Review of Automation in Horticulture*.
- Government, industry and training providers collaborate, identify, co-ordinate and share best practice in skills delivery for horticulture and landscaping. We would welcome regular Ministerial round-tables with the horticulture industry on this issue.
- Establish a greater proportion of British-produced plants in public sector projects through best-practice in public procurement and projects.
- Expand the existing tree nursery production grant scheme in terms of accessibility and scale to make tangible differences to UK growers.
- Government and industry work together on a realistic and sustainable peat-removal growing media strategy.
- Make growth in exporting UK plant products a priority and working with industry to address barriers and facilitate opportunities.
- Ensure importing plant goods is as smooth a trade process as possible and make the proposed Border Control Points cost and administratively affective for industry. Additionally launching an inclusive Trusted Trader scheme at the same time border checks go live in 2023.

The sector has undertaken substantial endeavour in setting out how Government and industry can work closely and collaboratively to improve the productivity and sustainability of the industry, and increase UK GDP. Increased government support for the industry will enable us to expand and modernise sustainably, with long-term confidence, and meet growing demand for plants, gardening and environmental-based solutions to climate change. We enclose the *Unlocking Green Growth* document and would welcome discussing our asks and ambitions with you and officials.

We recognise the challenges faced across the economy, and hope that these measures we set out can be enacted and the urgency is understood. We are concerned that without certainty and a robust environment for our members to trade successfully, we will see reduced investment as well as possible closures and job losses.

We look forward to hearing how the Government can support our members' businesses so that in turn we can invest and promote economic growth across the UK.

Yours sincerely,



Jennifer Pheasey
Director of Public Affairs, Horticultural Trades Association

Encl: Unlocking Green Growth; Review of Automation in Horticulture

CC: Felicity Buchan MP, Exchequer Secretary to HM Treasury; Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy; Rt Hon Ranil Jayawardena MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs