

Emma Hardy MP
Minister for Flooding and Water
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Cc Thomas.powell@defra.gov.uk

1 July 2026

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you on behalf of the [Horticultural Trades Association \(HTA\)](#) and [British Association of Landscape Industries \(BALI\)](#) regarding water restrictions and the impact these have on our member businesses. Together, the HTA and BALI represent nearly 3,800 members and businesses including growers, retailers, landscaping businesses and garden designers who collectively deliver the gardens, green spaces, and green-blue infrastructure that are vital for the economy, environment, and our health and wellbeing.

The June heatwave saw pavements and playgrounds in London reaching 57°C. In his *Heat Ready London* Plan, the Mayor of London recognises the need for more urban greening to cool the city and clean up the air. However, delivering those plants and trees, expanding our green spaces, and protecting our private gardens requires water to keep this critical stock alive. HTA data shows that garden centres and plant growers use just 0.15% of the UK's total water use. Moreover, despite being a water user, well-designed gardens and landscapes can dramatically reduce long-term demand through rainwater harvesting, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), drought-tolerant planting, permeable paving, and efficient irrigation. Yet messaging around water restrictions – often termed hosepipe bans – have a direct, negative impact on the sector.

The first Temporary Use Ban (TUB) has been announced by South East Water (SEW). Despite calling on water companies to get their messaging about water restrictions right, we have, once again, seen this referred to as a hosepipe ban. SWE issued guidance suggesting that landscapers could not water a newly laid lawn only to change the guidance overnight, later confirming that they can use a hosepipe on newly laid lawns “*for a period of 4 weeks...*”. Trees, whips, saplings and hedging planted in the last three years, before the ban, can also be watered with a hosepipe. While it is good to see the guidance updated, this mixed messaging is extremely unhelpful for businesses and their customers. A wholesale nursery business in the South East said “*the mere threat of a hosepipe ban cost our business £300,000 because of cancelled orders.*”

Perennials and shrubs, which are most planted at this time of year, are not included in the Drought Code of Practice 2023 exemptions. Given the enormous commercial impact this has on our member businesses, exemptions should not be constrained to trees, hedging, saplings and whips but extend to perennials and shrubs as well.

We recognise the need to conserve water in times of shortage, however, only allowing landscapers to water newly planted gardens **before** a ban is introduced effectively renders their businesses obsolete during any TUB. It is worth noting that in 2025, some TUBs, particularly those announced by SEW, lasted for more than six months. According to BALI's Lay of the Land report, a quarter of members said water management is challenging or very challenging for their businesses, as well as pressures from climate change and hotter and dryer weather patterns, emphasising the need for a clear and long-term strategic approach to water management.

Our gardens and green spaces can help mitigate flooding and cool our homes and buildings, but to deliver and maintain those spaces, we need access to water. A proper, long-term water strategy, developed in partnership with industry – particularly those nature-based sectors that make us more resilient – is critical.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you at the earliest opportunity to discuss this in more detail, particularly as more heatwaves and likely water restrictions are expected this summer. Please reach out to policy@hta.org.uk to arrange this. Please note, a copy of this letter has been shared with MPs in the South East Water region.

Yours sincerely,



Fran Barnes
Chief Executive Officer, HTA



Wayne Grills
Chief Executive, BALI