

**Rt Hon Keir Starmer MP**

Prime Minister

10 Downing Street

London SW1A 2AA     *By Email*

Copied to:

- Minister of State for Courts and Legal Services
- Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Attorney General

3 November 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

**Upholding the Aarhus Convention and Access to Environmental Justice in the UK**

We write to express deep concern regarding recent press reports suggesting that Ministers are considering further weakening the rights of British people to take legal steps to protect their environment. These reports include speculation about further restrictions to judicial review, the removal of cost caps in environmental cases, and even the possibility of the UK withdrawing from the Aarhus Convention (the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters).

Such proposals, if pursued, would represent a significant regression in the UK's commitment to environmental democracy, accountability and the rule of law. Abandoning Aarhus and undermining access to environmental justice will only serve to further erode public trust and confidence in the Government, at a time when these rights have never been more important.

Judicial Review plays a vital role in ensuring government accountability and enabling civil society to challenge potentially unlawful decisions—particularly in environmental matters where public interest is paramount and the stakes are generational.

The Aarhus Convention is a cornerstone of participatory environmental governance, but the UK has already been found non-compliant with a number of aspects of the Convention. We are grateful for recent assurances that the Government is committed to the Convention and has no plans to withdraw from it. But, as the Eighth Meeting of the Parties to the Convention approaches, we urge you to show leadership by committing fully to UK compliance, including maintaining robust access to justice provisions and cost protections for claimants.

You have spoken often about the importance of the rule of law and multilateral cooperation. Please ensure your Government remains steadfast in defending access to environmental justice and that the UK approaches the forthcoming Meeting of the Parties as a committed and compliant signatory.

Yours sincerely,

## Link Members

Beccy Speight, CEO, RSPB	Craig Bennett, CEO, The Wildlife Trusts
Roger Mortlock, CEO, CPRE The Countryside Charity	James Wallace, CEO, River Action
Asad Rehman, CEO, Friends of the Earth	James Blake, CEO, YHA (England & Wales)
Sandy Luk, CEO, Marine Conservation Society	Rebecca Wrigley, CEO, Rewilding Britain
Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary, Open Spaces Society	Mark Lloyd, CEO, The Rivers Trust
Dr Tony Gent, CEO, Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust	Nigel Palmer, CEO, Badger Trust
Chris Butler-Stroud, CEO, Whale & Dolphin Conservation	Nick Measham, CEO, WildFish
Gill Perkins, CEO, Bumblebee Conservation Trust	Craig Macadam, Co-Leader, Buglife
Paul Coulson, CEO, Institute of Fisheries Management	Sue Sayer, Seal Research Trust
Josie Cohen, Director, Pesticide Action Network	Sandra King, CEO, The Beaver Trust
Matt Larsen-Daw, CEO, The Mammal Society	Harry Barton, CEO, Earthwatch Europe
Nida Al-Fulaij, CEO, People's Trust for Endangered Species	Sally Hamilton, Director, Orca
Giles Bristow, CEO, Surfers Against Sewage	Ross Maloney, CEO, The Ramblers
Dr Rose O'Neill, CEO, Campaign for National Parks	Kathy Wormald, CEO, Froglife
Mark Jones, Director, Humane World for Animals UK	Kit Stoner, CEO, Bat Conservation Trust
Julie Williams, CEO, Butterfly Conservation	Fay Vass, CEO, British Hedgehog Society
Anthony Field, Head, Compassion in World Farming UK	Hugo Tagholm, Executive Director, Oceana
Dr Anna Watson, Director of Policy and Advocacy, CHEMTrust	
Graham Walley, National Forum for Biological Recording	
Thomas Schultz-Jagow, Director of Advocacy and Prevention, RSPCA	
Sally Hayns, CEO, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)	
Emma Montlake and Tom Brenan, Joint Executive Co-Directors, Environmental Law Foundation	
Chris Packham CBE, Dr Ruth Tingay (Co-Directors), Bob Elliot (CEO) Wild Justice	
Karen Whitfield, Director, Wales Environment Link	
Richard Benwell, CEO, Wildlife & Countryside Link	

## King's Counsel

Estelle Dehon KC, Cornerstone Chambers	Harriet Townsend KC, Cornerstone Chambers
David Wolfe KC, Matrix Chambers	Richard Lord KC, Brick Court Chambers
Victoria Wakefield KC, Brick Court Chambers	Stephen Tromans, KC 39 Essex Chambers

### **Other Organisations & Individuals**

Jamie Peters, Interim CEO, Public Law Project

Ruth Chambers, Senior Fellow, Green Alliance

Dr Shivali Fifiield, Chief Officer, Environmental Rights Centre Scotland

Professor Maria Lee, UCL Faculty of Laws, University College, London

Sue Willman KC (Hon), Senior Lecturer, King's Legal Clinic, King's College, London

Dr Joanna Miller Smallwood, Associate Professor and supervising solicitor of the Environmental Justice Law Clinic, Law Department, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Sussex

Jane Holder, Professor of Environmental Law, Faculty of Laws, UCL

Dr Emily Barritt, Junior Chair Professor, Environment and Legal Orders, Dauphine University Paris and Trustee of the Environmental Law Foundation

Dr Duncan Weaver, Senior Lecturer, University of Suffolk