

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, The Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London, SW1A 2AA

*Copied to:*

The Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Parliamentary Under-Secretary,  
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs  
London, SW1P 3JR

30<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

**For the health of our nation, let's give people more access to nature: let's extend the Right to Roam.**

We write to you as authors, musicians, actors and artists, united in our belief that we all need greater access to the English countryside. In the books we write, the songs we sing, the art that we make, we celebrate the essential connection that we feel with nature. Our love for nature resonates with our millions of fans and followers, but in England, it is actively discouraged by the law. This is not only unfair; it is also untenable.

Twenty years ago this week the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act became law. It introduced for the first time a Right to Roam in England, giving people access to some of our most beautiful landscapes. It has been both highly successful and incredibly popular, yet it covers only a fraction of our countryside. We have freedom to roam over just 8% of England, and only 3% of rivers in England and Wales are legally accessible to kayakers, paddle-boarders and wild swimmers. But just over the border in Scotland, the law encourages the public to swim, walk, camp, kayak, forage and climb, to connect with nature in a responsible manner that is better both for them and for the environment. Why should we, in England, be denied this right?

Lockdown demonstrated how vital it is for us to have access to green outdoor space, both for our physical and our mental health. There is now a body of scientific evidence showing just how essential nature is for our wellbeing. A simple walk in the woods can boost our immune system for a month afterwards.<sup>1</sup> Exercising in a green space can help combat ADHD in children,<sup>2</sup> and obesity, stress and depression in adults.<sup>3</sup> Physical inactivity costs the NHS around £1bn per year, and wider society around £7.4bn per year.<sup>4</sup> So let's follow the science: to improve the health of our nation, to alleviate the pressure on the NHS, we need greater access to nature.

**That's why we are supporting the campaign to extend the Right to Roam**

([www.righttoroam.org.uk](http://www.righttoroam.org.uk)). We support their proposals to extend the CRoW Act to cover woodlands, rivers and Green Belt land, because these landscapes would give millions more people ready access to nature on their doorsteps. Access to nature is unequal: one in eight British households has no garden, and Black people in England are nearly four times as likely as White people to have no outdoor space at home.<sup>5</sup> To be truly beneficial to our health, nature must not be treated only as an occasional holiday destination, but be a part of everybody's everyday lives.<sup>6</sup> Doing so could also boost the economy through increased tourism, and could

lead to benefits for the environment: studies show that the more people experience nature, the more likely they are to protect it.<sup>7</sup>

With new rights come renewed responsibilities, both to nature and to the people who work in our countryside. Freedom to roam does not mean the freedom to trample or litter. We need to strengthen and promote the Countryside Code, to teach respect for the essential work of farmers and encourage a culture of care and love for the countryside through early years education. Our children must learn about nature in the best way possible: by actually being in it. Only with a visceral, lived experience of nature can we grow to really care for it.

Extending the CRoW Act would be a bold and far-reaching act by this Government, and its effects would resonate for generations to come. Now, more than ever, the time is right to increase our Right to Roam.

Yours sincerely,

<b>A.L. Kennedy</b>	Author, <i>All the Rage</i> and <i>Serious Sweet</i>
<b>Adam Weymouth</b>	Author, <i>Kings of the Yukon</i>
<b>Alan Moore</b>	Author, <i>Watchmen</i>
<b>Alastair Bonnett</b>	Author, <i>Off the Map</i>
<b>Ali Smith</b>	Author <i>How to be both</i> and playwright
<b>Amy Liptrot</b>	Author, <i>The Outrun</i>
<b>Amy-Jane Beer</b>	Author, <i>Cool Nature; The A-Z of Wildlife Watching</i>
<b>Andy Goldsworthy</b>	Artist
<b>Ben Hoare</b>	Author, <i>The Wonders of Nature</i>
<b>Ben Myers</b>	Author, <i>The Gallows Pole</i>
<b>Benjamin Fallow</b>	Naturalist and artist, aged 7
<b>Billy Bragg</b>	Musician
<b>Bob Gilbert</b>	Author, <i>Ghost Trees: Nature and People in a London Parish</i>
<b>Boff Whalley</b>	Musician (Chumbawumba)
<b>Brian Eno</b>	Musician
<b>Bryan Talbot</b>	Graphic novelist, creator of <i>The Adventures of Luther Arkwright</i>
<b>Cally Conway</b>	Printmaker
<b>Caspar Henderson</b>	Author, <i>The Book of Barely Imagined Beings</i>
<b>Catrina Davies</b>	Author, <i>Homesick</i>
<b>Charles Foster</b>	Author, <i>Being a Beast</i>
<b>Charlie Adlard</b>	Graphic novelist
<b>Chris Packham</b>	Naturalist and TV presenter, author <i>Fingers in the Sparkle Jar</i>
<b>Dan Gretton</b>	Author, <i>I You We Them</i>
<b>Dave McKean</b>	Illustrator and comic book artist

<b>David Bellamy</b>	Watercolour artist
<b>David Eagle</b>	Musician (The Young'uns)
<b>David Gange</b>	Author, <i>The Frayed Atlantic Edge</i>
<b>David Lindo</b>	Naturalist and author, <i>The Urban Birder</i>
<b>Dr Mary Talbot</b>	Academic; author of graphic novel <i>Dotter of Her Father's Eyes</i>
<b>Ed O'Brien</b>	Musician (Radiohead)
<b>Frank Turner</b>	Folk and punk singer-songwriter
<b>George Monbiot</b>	Author, <i>Feral; Out of the Wreckage</i>
<b>Gregory Norminton</b>	Author, <i>The Devil's Highway</i>
<b>Guy Shrubsole</b>	Author, <i>Who Owns England?</i>
<b>Helen Jukes</b>	Author, <i>A Honeybee Heart has Five Openings</i>
<b>Helen Mort</b>	Poet
<b>Hugh Warwick</b>	Author, <i>Linescapes; The Hedgehog Book</i>
<b>Iain Sinclair</b>	Author, <i>London Orbital</i>
<b>Ian Carter</b>	Folk musician (Stick in the Wheel)
<b>Jackie Morris</b>	Artist and illustrator, <i>The Lost Words; The Lost Spells</i>
<b>James Canton</b>	Author, <i>The Oak Papers</i>
<b>James Macdonald Lockhart</b>	Author, <i>Raptor: A Journey Through Birds</i>
<b>Janette Phillips</b>	Visual artist
<b>Jarvis Cocker</b>	Musician
<b>Jay Griffiths</b>	Author, <i>Wild; Pip Pip</i>
<b>Jean Atkin</b>	Poet
<b>Jeremy Deller</b>	Artist
<b>Jeremy Mynott</b>	Author, <i>Birdscapes</i>
<b>Jerome Flynn</b>	Actor ( <i>Game of Thrones</i> )
<b>Jess Stiles</b>	Ceramicist
<b>Jim Ghedi</b>	Musician
<b>Jim Perrin</b>	Climber, travel writer & <i>Guardian</i> Country diarist
<b>Jini Reddy</b>	Author, <i>Wanderland</i>
<b>John Lewis-Stempel</b>	Author, <i>Meadowland: The Private Life of an English Field</i>
<b>Johnny Flynn</b>	Musician
<b>Jon Boden</b>	Singer, composer & musician
<b>Kerry Andrew</b>	Composer and author, <i>Swansong</i>
<b>Lizzy Stewart</b>	Author and illustrator, <i>There's A Tiger In My Garden</i>
<b>Llinos Elin Owen</b>	Musician and kayaker
<b>Lucy Jones</b>	Author, <i>Losing Eden</i>

<b>Mark Avery</b>	Author, <i>Inglorious</i>
<b>Mark Cocker</b>	Author, <i>Our Place</i>
<b>Mark Ellingham</b>	Writer and founder of <i>Rough Guides</i>
<b>Mark Rylance</b>	Actor ( <i>Wolf Hall; Dunkirk</i> )
<b>Mark Thomas</b>	Comedian and activist
<b>Martin Rowson</b>	Cartoonist for <i>The Guardian</i>
<b>Mary-Ann Ochota</b>	Broadcaster and author, <i>Secret Britain</i>
<b>Matt Gaw</b>	Author, <i>The Pull of the River</i>
<b>Max Porter</b>	Author, <i>Grief Is The Thing With Feathers</i>
<b>Melissa Harrison</b>	Author, <i>The Stubborn Light of Things</i>
<b>Michael Hughes</b>	Musician (The Young'uns)
<b>Mike Dilger</b>	Writer and broadcaster, <i>The One Show</i>
<b>Mya-Rose Craig</b>	President of Black2Nature
<b>Nancy Kerr</b>	Folk musician and fiddle player
<b>Naomi Wood</b>	Author, <i>The Hiding Game</i>
<b>Niall Griffiths</b>	Author, <i>Grits</i>
<b>Nick Hart</b>	Musician
<b>Nick Hayes</b>	Author, <i>The Book of Trespass</i>
<b>Nick Hunt</b>	Author, <i>Where the Wild Winds Are</i>
<b>Nicky Hirst</b>	Visual artist
<b>Nicola Chester</b>	Writer and Guardian Country diarist
<b>Nicola Davies</b>	Children's book author & illustrator, <i>King of the Sky</i>
<b>Nicola Kearey</b>	Folk musician (Stick in the Wheel)
<b>Pascale Petit</b>	Poet
<b>Patrick Barkham</b>	Author, <i>Badgerlands</i> and <i>Islander</i> , and <i>Guardian</i> journalist
<b>Paul Kingsnorth</b>	Author, <i>The Wake</i> and <i>Real England</i>
<b>Peter Oswald</b>	Playwright
<b>Philippe Sands QC</b>	Lawyer and author, <i>East West Street</i>
<b>Richard Mabey</b>	Author, <i>Food for Free; Turning the Boat for Home</i>
<b>Rob Cowen</b>	Author, <i>Common Ground</i>
<b>Rob Heron</b>	Musician (Rob Heron and the Teapad Orchestra)
<b>Robert Macfarlane</b>	Author, <i>Underland; The Old Ways</i>
<b>Sam Lee</b>	Folk singer
<b>Sam Sweeney</b>	Musician (Bellowhead)
<b>Sean Cooney</b>	Musician (The Young'uns)
<b>Seth Lakeman</b>	Folk singer

<b>Shirley Collins</b>	Folk musician
<b>Stan Donwood</b>	Artist for Radiohead and Robert Macfarlane
<b>Stephen Fry</b>	Actor and comedian
<b>Steve Bell</b>	Cartoonist for <i>The Guardian</i>
<b>Tom Moorhouse</b>	Children's book author, <i>The New Adventures of Mr Toad</i>
<b>Tom Nancollas</b>	Author, <i>Seashaken Houses</i>
<b>Zakiya Mckenzie</b>	Poet and writer-in-residence at the Forestry Commission 2019-20

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