



Jill Scott MBE
President, Fields in Trust

Helen Griffiths FRSA
Chief Executive, Fields in Trust

OPEN LETTER

We are deeply concerned that proposed planning reforms could remove the statutory protections that help safeguard England's playing fields and sports facilities. These spaces are not just playing fields – they are vital infrastructure for health and wellbeing, community sport, and children's play.

Playing fields are irreplaceable. Once built on, they are gone forever, and Sport England's statutory consultee role is an important line of defence. Weakening this protection risks accelerating the loss of the very spaces that make grassroots sport and physical activity possible, at a time when participation is growing and demand has never been higher.

Data from Fields in Trust, which provides the UK's only proven legal model to safeguard parks, playgrounds, and green spaces forever, has found that almost half of Britain already lives more than a 10-minute walk from a playing field, with the poorest areas continuing to lose most green spaces to development or closure. Since it was established in 1925, the organisation has helped protect nearly 3,000 green spaces in perpetuity, and as it enters its second centenary, this mission remains critical.

We therefore call on policymakers to ensure that any planning reforms retain a meaningful mechanism to protect playing fields and sports facilities for future generations.

This is about social justice. The people who need green space the most often have the least access. Without these protections, the health and wellbeing of communities will suffer.

Sincerely,

Jill Scott MBE
Former footballer, 2022 Women's Euros Winner and Fields in Trust President

Helen Griffiths FRSA
Chief Executive of Fields in Trust

Signed:

Alex Yee MBE, Triathlete and Olympic Champion

Ama Agbeze MBE, Former netballer and Commonwealth Champion

Clare Bishop, Former triathlete and Paralympic Champion

Danny Crates, Former sprinter and Paralympic Champion

David Wheeler, Former footballer

Ed Clancy OBE, Former cyclist and Olympic Champion

Eilish McColgan, Middle- and long-distance runner, Commonwealth Champion and Olympian

Jason Leonard OBE, Former rugby player and 2003 Rugby World Cup Winner

Matthew Fleming, Former England cricketer and former President of the MCC

Sir Matthew Pinsent CBE, Former rower, Olympic Champion and SportsAid Trustee

Sir Mo Farah CBE, Former long-distance runner, Olympic Champion and YST Ambassador

Tessa Sanderson CBE, Former javelin-thrower, Olympic Champion and President of Women in Sport

Tom Bosworth MBE, Former race walker, Commonwealth Champion and Olympian

Thurstan Bannister, son of Roger Bannister
Paul Critchley, CEO of Active Cornwall
Matt Evans, CEO of Active Devon
Jason Fergus, Director of Active Essex
Kirsty Dunleavy-Harris, CEO of Active Gloucestershire
David Gent, CEO of Active Humber
Liz Davidson-Kennett, Partnerships Director of Active Kent and Medway
Eve Dewsnap, Director of Active Norfolk
Andy Taylor, CEO of Active Partnerships
Adam Blaze, CEO of Activity Alliance
Jamie Cook, CEO of Angling Trust
Dr Amanda Gummer, Chair of Association of Play Industries (API)
Sue Storey, CEO of Badminton England
Chad Ehlertsen, CEO of British American Football
Jon Dutton OBE, CEO of British Cycling
Jim Eyre, CEO of British Equestrian Federation
Kathy Morris, National Lead of British Inline Puck Hockey
Andy Gratwick, Managing Director of British Kite Sports
Peter Brooke, CEO of British Orienteering
Sarah Finney, Director of British Roller Sports Federation
Diana Hunter, Chair of British Rowing
Ruth Daniels, CEO of British Triathlon
Justine Baynes, CEO of British Wheelchair Basketball
Craig Anthony, CEO of British Wrestling
Andy Dalby-Welsh, CEO of Croquet England
Richard Gould, CEO of England and Wales Cricket Board
Chris Jones, CEO of England Athletics
Mike Bain, CEO of England Handball
Rich Beer, CEO of England Hockey
Fran Connolly, CEO of England Netball
Baroness Sue Campbell, Chair of England Netball and former Chair of UK Sport
Mark Williams, CEO of England Squash
Victoria Gosling OBE, CEO of GB Snowsport
Brett Nicholls, CEO of Get Berkshire Active
Jason Brisbane, CEO of Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby
Hayley Lever CEO of Greater Manchester Moving
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Carolin Göhler, President of Landscape Institute
Nick Bitel, CEO of London Marathon Group
Alex Welsh, CEO of London Playing Fields Foundation
Emily Robinson, CEO of London Sport
Scott Lloyd, CEO of Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)
Justine Blomley, CEO of Merseyside Sport
Chris Holmes, CEO of Northamptonshire Sport
Calum Osborne, CEO of the Nottingham Forest Community Trust
Ashley Metcalfe, CEO of Paddle UK
Elizabeth Duggan, CEO of Parkrun
Eugene Minogue, CEO of Play England
Robert Udwin, Council member and former President of The RFU
Sir James Wates, Chair of The RFU
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Abi Ekoku, interim CEO of Rugby Football League
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Richard Shaw, CEO of Sports & Play Construction Association
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87 signatories