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**From Tamara Finkelstein CB**  
Permanent Secretary

**Targeted interventions to deliver on environmental ambitions**

Dear Chair,

I am writing to update you on recommendation 4b of the *Achieving Environmental Goals* Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report of April 2021, that Defra write to the Committee setting out work assessing the impact of targeted interventions such as the Green Recovery Challenge Fund on safeguarding green jobs.

Green Recovery Challenge Fund – Round 1 evaluation

The first round of the £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF), launched in September 2020, provided funding to support the delivery of 69 environmental projects in England. Projects were originally due to finish in March 2022 but due to a range of pressures resulting principally from the COVID pandemic, they were offered an extension of up to 3 months. Total grants of £37.8 million were awarded, ranging in size from £62,600 to £3,860,200.

The [independent evaluation of Round 1 of the GRCF](#) (commissioned by National Lottery Heritage Fund), has now been published. This report (attached) provides an analysis of monitoring data and findings provided by grantees, as well as an impact and value for money evaluation.

Green Jobs

The GRCF was launched at pace to enable the environmental sector to withstand the considerable challenges caused by the pandemic, and thereby create and safeguard green jobs in both the short and longer term. According to the evaluation report (p.9), it was widely considered by grantees to have achieved this aim.

Round 1 funding supported at least 1,200 jobs, both directly and indirectly, in environmental non-governmental organisations, their project partner organisations and through wider local supply chains. This included 69 apprenticeship positions.

A wide range of jobs were supported by the GRCF including project managers and project support officers as well as conservationists and youth and community workers. Most of the jobs were newly created for the GRCF (65%), while others were positions receiving partial support through full cost recovery (22%) or existing roles protected from redundancy (13%).

The report states that “the benefits of GRCF funding are also expected to continue in the longer term from the increased resilience of organisations, new skills developed through the GRCF projects and from jobs retained beyond the end of the project.”

### Delivery against 25 Year Environment Plan goals

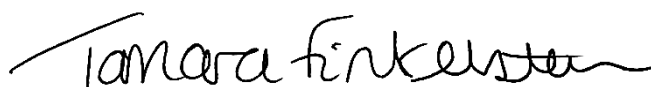
Round 1 projects reported delivering environmental actions across 930 sites around England providing habitat restoration and creation, species protection and nature-based solutions. These actions delivered environmental benefits for 875,000 hectares of land in total and 675 km of linear features like rivers and hedgerows. A total of 1.1 million trees were planted on 367 sites across England, exceeding original target of 800,000 trees planted by 37%. These activities deliver against the targets and ambitions set out in the thriving plants and wildlife and climate change goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

Furthermore, over 170,000 people were engaged through more than 9,400 different events comprising a combination of in-person events and online activities. This included 8,500 in-person events delivered at 800 different sites across England, which engaged 109,000 people. Nearly half of these activities were targeted at under-represented or other priority groups. The legacy impacts of these activities are expected to be significant with the large majority of projects (93%) expecting their engagement activities to continue in the future. This delivers against the beauty, heritage and engagement goal of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

### Round 2 evaluation

Round 2 projects are due to complete by the end of June 2023 and the independent evaluation of Round 2 should be completed by January 2024. The final report is expected to be published later that spring.

Yours sincerely,



**TAMARA FINKELSTEIN**  
**Permanent Secretary**