

The Prime Minister  
Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
10 Downing Street  
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London

Wednesday 18 December 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

Congratulations on your election victory. Your strong parliamentary majority will permit confident decisions on the climate challenges now before us. We urge you to seize that opportunity. We are writing to request an early meeting so we can brief you on our assessment of the priorities ahead.

UK efforts to address the climate crisis have so far fallen short. This story needn't continue. With the commitment of the full Cabinet to tackling the causes and effects of climate change, the UK can lead in addressing the defining global challenge of our age.

Your Government's actions in the coming year will define the UK response to the climate crisis. As host of next year's UN Climate Summit in Glasgow, the steps we take in the next 12 months will also have a lasting global impact. In this Parliament, the UK *must* get on track to delivering Net Zero emissions, and adapt to the climate-related changes we are experiencing. We have a unique opportunity to define the 2020s as the decade of delivery against legally-binding targets set by Parliament – meeting the ambitions of the Conservative election manifesto.

#### *Climate governance*

Were you to decide to make changes to the form and structure of Government, we trust that you recognise that climate change is not an issue that can be owned by any single Minister or Ministry. It requires strong leadership at the heart of Government, implementation of climate policies across Government, and a programme of change at a scale not previously attempted. 2019 established broad public, business, and political support for action; 2020 needs to be the year of renewed policy implementation in response. We therefore very much welcome your commitment to chair a cross-Cabinet Committee on climate change. It is this Cabinet Committee that can:

- **Lead the Government's strategy to reduce emissions**, demanding ambitious policy from *all* departments to ensure homes, businesses, industry, transport and land are helping to deliver Net Zero.
- **Ensure all departments are prioritising action to adapt to climate change**. The country is not prepared for even the minimum expected level of global warming, let alone the extreme changes predicted if international efforts to reduce emissions continue to stall.
- **Inject new urgency into the development and implementation of policy**. It has been nearly seven months since the Net Zero target became law. Every day of inaction makes the challenge of cutting emissions harder and costlier. Technological innovation is only

part of the answer. We must not wait for future technologies to solve the problems we can already tackle with known solutions.

- **Use all of the tools available.** Public spending will play a role, but our analysis also points to the importance of strong market-shaping mechanisms. These include carbon pricing fiscal policies, but also regulatory tools which can often drive the transition more rapidly than price mechanisms alone.
- **Ensure that the Treasury's Net Zero funding review identifies ways fully and fairly to pay for the transition,** putting Net Zero at the heart of the UK's economic strategy.
- **Oversee effective collaboration** between central, devolved and local/regional Government bodies. Addressing climate change demands a mix of national and local policies – and is a major coordination and governance challenge.

### *Priority actions*

There are five key priorities for cutting the UK's emissions:

1. **Buildings.** An ambitious and properly funded strategy for entirely removing fossil fuels from the UK's building stock, with action beginning immediately and standards that set a clear path for the longer-term.
2. **Transport.** Rapid progress in the implementation of your manifesto commitment to consult on an earlier phase-out of petrol and diesel cars, ideally by 2030.
3. **Electricity.** Delivering on your manifesto commitment for 40GW of offshore wind by 2030 – and ensuring that any market reforms are complementary to the Net Zero goal.
4. **Industry.** Developing an ongoing mechanism to pay for emissions reductions from industry and an approach to delivering hydrogen and CCS infrastructure, alongside your promised capital support.
5. **Land use and agriculture.** Introducing a world-leading package through the Agriculture and Environment Bills to cut emissions from agriculture and to pay for the 30,000 hectares (75,000 acres) of annual tree planting promised in your manifesto. We will offer specific policy recommendations on this in January.

Our recent assessment of UK action to adapt to climate change concluded that we are worryingly unprepared for the changes ahead. Many departmental plans do not even include a basic assessment of climate risk. Your Government can act to:

1. **Reduce flood risk.** This means delivering on your manifesto commitment to increase flood defence spending by £4 billion, but also enabling 200,000 properties that cannot be protected by defences to install property-level flood barriers. There has been a 20% increase in the paving-over of urban areas since 2001, increasing the risk of flash flooding. Planning policy needs to change to mandate natural features that absorb rainfall in new building developments.
2. **Manage the risks from extreme heat.** Over 2,000 people already die prematurely due to hot weather each year across the UK; this is likely to rise to over 7,000 in 30 years' time. The scorching summer of 2018 will be an average summer by 2050. There is no policy to ensure the risk of overheating is reduced in homes, hospitals, schools or care homes. Building Regulations need to be strengthened to make sure adequate natural cooling (not air-conditioning) is built into properties, alongside energy efficiency.
3. **Reduce the risk of drought.** Water company plans are heading in the right direction but need further signals from Government. Without further action, water deficits, which are currently negligible, could exceed 3 billion litres per day in the 2050s in England. Water consumption per person needs to fall by 30% to manage this, and supplies need to increase urgently.

4. **Protect the natural environment.** Climate change will exacerbate biodiversity loss in the UK and globally. Delivering on your manifesto commitments to create a Nature Climate Fund, increase tree planting and restore peatland will help to improve resilience and reduce emissions from land.

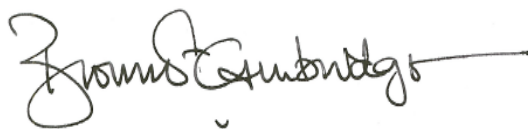
We marked recently the 30th anniversary of Margaret Thatcher's 1989 speech to the UN General Assembly. That speech described accurately the science of human-induced climate change and the scale of its economic impact. The Prime Minister advocated a strong global response then; but what followed was too little. You have the opportunity to lead a better international effort. But first, we must get our own house in order.

We look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,



**Lord Deben**  
Chairman  
Committee on Climate Change (CCC)



**Baroness Brown**  
Chair  
Adaptation Committee of the CCC