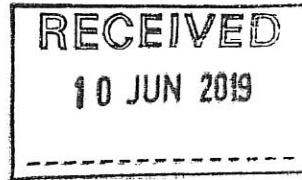




Department
for Education



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

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6 June 2019

Dear Alison,

Thank you for your letter dated 21 May to the Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, regarding the recent motion passed by Maidstone Borough Council in relation to climate change. Your letter has been passed to my Department, and I am replying as this matter falls within my Ministerial portfolio.

I welcome the Council's commitment to tackling climate change as there is no doubt that it is one of the most profound global challenges we face. The decisions we make today will affect the future of our planet for generations to come, and the Government fully recognises that action is urgently needed in our own country and across the world. However, we must look to the challenge ahead with hope rather than fear. We should be proud of the UK's leadership in tackling climate change and the real progress we have made in reducing our emissions whilst driving cleaner economic growth. Our achievements should be celebrated – not to imply that we are complacent, but to demonstrate that with ambitious domestic policy and concerted international action, solving the challenge of climate change is possible.

Our Climate Change Act 2008 was the first of its kind in the world and set a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 relative to 1990 levels. We are already making strong progress towards that target - between 1990 and 2017, the UK reduced its emissions by over 40% while growing the economy by more than two thirds – on latest available data across countries to 2016, the best performance in the G7 on a per person basis.

We recognise the need to go further and the Clean Growth Strategy sets out our plans to build on our progress in decarbonising the power sector, while looking further across the whole of the economy and the country, through to 2032. It includes ambitious proposals on housing, business, transport, the natural environment and green finance. More details about the Clean Growth Strategy can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy.

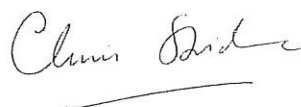
We are convinced of the need for urgent action on climate change, which is why we asked our independent advisors - the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) - for advice last October on the implications of the Paris Agreement for the UK's long-term emissions reduction targets, including on setting a net zero target. The CCC published their advice to the Government on 2 May 2019. It sets out a path for the UK to become the first major economy to legislate to end our contribution to global warming entirely. We are now considering this comprehensive, ground-breaking report, and have committed to responding in a timeframe which reflects the urgency of this crucial issue.

Achieving clean growth and tackling climate change has to be a shared endeavour between the Government, devolved nations, Local Authorities, business, civil society and the British people – as well as the rest of the world. That is why we held the first Green GB Week last year - an incredible example of us coming together to raise awareness of clean growth and the pressing challenges we face in addressing climate change, while demonstrating the opportunities that action on these issues would bring. Green GB Week this year will be taking place between 4 and 8 November, as part of the Government's Year of Green Action, and I would be delighted if Maidstone Borough Council could participate. Further information will be available on our website (greengb.campaign.gov.uk/) shortly.

As a Local Authority, you may be interested to note that we continue to enable greenhouse gas emission reductions through the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme. The capital pot for England is currently £262 million and is planned to increase each year to a total of £385 million by 2020/21. This funding, managed by Salix Finance, has delivered over 17,000 projects, significantly improving energy performance in the public sector. It has generated estimated bill savings in the wider public sector of around £55 million in 2017/18, with projected bill savings of £72 million in 2018/19.

More broadly at the local level, there is almost £20 million allocated to the Local Energy Programme which is designed to maximise the local contribution to clean growth. The programme works with Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Authorities and communities in England to drive the development of clean growth as a core plank of local industrial strategies and, critically, to support local clean growth investment. The key focus is the mobilisation of green finance to support projects at the local level that would not otherwise happen. The Local Energy Programme aims to start to address local barriers to clean growth activity, and to equip local areas to drive private sector investment into clean growth across a pipeline of local projects. If you would like any further information, I would encourage you to contact my officials in the Local Energy Team here at: localenergy@beis.gov.uk.

Thank you again for taking the time to write. In addition to this letter, I have also enclosed a summary of 'Ten Climate Actions to Celebrate' that may be of interest. I hope you find this information and letter useful.



CHRIS SKIDMORE MP

TEN CLIMATE ACTIONS TO CELEBRATE

1. The UK passed the world's first Climate Change Act over a decade ago with cross-party support. This gave us both a framework to set statutory carbon budgets and set up the independent Committee on Climate Change.
2. Since 2000, independent analysis shows that no other major industrialised country has done more than the UK to cut CO₂ intensity (the measure of carbon for each pound of GDP). We have seen reductions of an average of 3.7 per cent a year, compared to the EU average of 2.3 per cent and a G7 average of 2.2 per cent. The last time emissions in the UK were this low was in 1888 when Queen Victoria was on the throne, and our progress is accelerating; between 2010 and 2018, we reduced UK greenhouse gas emissions by approximately a quarter overall.
3. Ending coal use in our electricity generation through a huge shift to renewables and gas driven by decisive policy action: a UK carbon floor price (in addition to the European ETS). We have seen coal use on the grid tumble from almost 40 per cent in 2012 to our first "coal free" generation day last April and our first coal-free week since the Industrial Revolution in May 2019. By 2025 the UK will have no coal powered electricity generation.
4. We've used this achievement to establish the global Powering Past Coal Alliance with Canada – a coalition of 80 national and sub-national governments, businesses and organizations committed to phasing out unabated coal generation by no later than 2030.
5. Renewable electricity generation has quadrupled since 2010 and clean electricity now gives us over 50 per cent of our total.
6. Our renewables mix is diverse but we are rapidly developing the incredible potential for offshore wind around our coastlines, with the world's largest offshore wind capacity (8GW) and a launch last month of new £250 million sector deal to provide at least 30 per cent of our electricity from offshore wind by 2030 (and a requirement that at least 60 per cent of the supply chain is UK sourced by 2030).
7. The low carbon sector and its supply chain is now providing almost 400,000 green collar jobs in the UK (more than aerospace) and is growing much faster than the main economy – with estimated potential exports of more than £60 billion by 2030.
8. The Government is investing more than £2.5 billion in low carbon technology over this parliament – the largest ever public R&D investment in clean growth.
9. We want to go further and faster and the UK was the first major industrial economy to ask for independent advice (from the Committee on Climate Change) on how to reach a Net Zero economy after the publication of the IPCC report last year.
10. We have consistently been in the vanguard of international action, helping to lead the Paris 2015 Climate conference, delivering £6 billion in International Climate Finance over this Parliament and bidding to host the crucial 2020 UN climate negotiations here in the UK.