

The Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

29 July 2015

Dear Prime Minister

As the leaders of ten leading UK charities concerned with protection of the environment, we are writing to raise a major concern. On the basis of the decisions made by your ministers in the first period of this government, we have concluded that early policy choices being made are running counter to the strong intentions you outlined in your pre-election climate pledges and in your manifesto.

We were delighted when you signed a climate pledge in February to “accelerate the transition to a competitive, energy efficient low carbon economy”, showing leadership that was applauded both domestically and internationally. We also welcomed the Conservative manifesto commitment to “being the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than that in which we found it”.

Unfortunately, ten green policies which could have helped you to achieve these goals have been cancelled or weakened over the past three months. These policies were developed over many years, often with cross party backing, and with the support and involvement of many businesses and charities. Only one of these decisions, to end subsidies for onshore wind, was a commitment from your manifesto. We have, as yet, seen no positive new measures that would restore the health of the environment or grow the low carbon economy.

We support your government’s desire to deliver the low carbon transition in a way that provides the best deal for the British public, but this will be harder to achieve following the decision to withdraw support for two of the most cost effective means of generating clean electricity: wind and solar PV, which with appropriate planning and environmental controls, can help meet the nation’s energy needs. Similarly, on energy efficiency, we have seen the abrupt cancellation of the zero carbon homes policy, six months before its full implementation, and after a decade of careful planning and very significant investment from house builders and their supply chain. This move commits people to higher bills for the whole life of the building. The zero carbon building commitment, due to be implemented by 2019, has also been cancelled, despite huge support from the construction sector.



National Trust



On transport, new rules for vehicle tax will result in the most polluting and the most efficient cars paying the same after the first year. The car industry expects this to lower the sales of fuel efficient vehicles, which the UK specialises in manufacturing.

With respect to the natural world, we are dismayed that drilling for shale gas and oil is to be allowed in areas used for drinking water, and that a proposed ban from government on shale gas and oil exploration and extraction in the most nature rich parts of the country has been dropped. We are concerned that the ban on neonicotinoids, linked to declining bee populations, has been lifted in key areas. We also note that the two departments which are most able to deliver your environmental agenda, DECC and Defra, are unprotected and at risk from disproportionate reductions in their staffing, because their budgets are dominated by large non-discretionary activities such as nuclear decommissioning and flood prevention.

As a sector, we are ready to work with you to help your government continue its low carbon transition, and to deliver your manifesto commitment to protect and enhance our beautiful natural environment. We would encourage you to resolve some of the contradictions that have emerged between the stated intentions of government and the actions of your ministers in its first period in office.

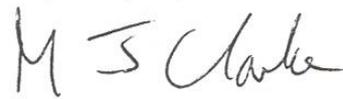
Yours sincerely,



David Baldock
Executive Director, IEEP



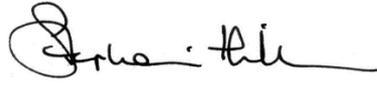
Craig Bennett
Chief Executive,
Friends of the Earth



Mike Clarke
Chief Executive, RSPB



Dame Helen Ghosh
Director-General,
National Trust



Stephanie Hilborne OBE
Chief Executive,
The Wildlife Trusts



Stephen Joseph
Chief Executive,
Campaign for Better Transport



David Nussbaum
Chief Executive, WWF UK



John Sauven
Executive Director,
Greenpeace UK



Shaun Spiers
Chief Executive, CPRE



Matthew Spencer
Director, Green Alliance