

From: Philip Dunne MP <philip.dunne.mp@parliament.uk>
Subject: Re: Climate emergency group Clunbury Parish Council (Case Ref: PD24561)
Date: 18 June 2020 at 12:09:42 BST

Dear Joanna and Tim

Thank you for your email of 7th June. I am grateful for the opportunity to add further clarity to the points I made in my letter of 24th February.

I am sorry you felt I did not give sufficient gravity to the issue of climate change, though I did suggest it was one of the greatest challenges we face. I have been a consistent campaigner for the environment, and during the COVID19 lockdown, am leading the Environmental Audit Committee in putting in place evidence sessions on how the government must deploy measures for a green recovery.

Like you, I welcome there has been ecological and environmental benefit brought about by COVID19, albeit not deliberately sought and at tremendous cost to people's lives. You will have seen that the UK has, for example, gone two full months without burning coal for energy – the longest period since the industrial revolution.

I hope however, you will have seen that this coincides with a 20.4% drop in the UK's GDP in April, and huge job losses, both realised and anticipated. Even if the UK reduced its carbon emission output every year by a comparable amount to this year, with the shutdown of the economy, until 2025, we would still not reach net zero. We would however stifle the research and development in new technologies, and investment in new clean growth businesses, that will help us get to net zero as fast as possible. I am all for ambitious targets, but there does have to be a sense of realism in policy making and a recognition by campaigners that we have a large population that needs to earn a living.

I can assure you that I am pressing for legislative change that will ensure we meet the UK's commitment to net zero by 2050, and before then where we can – for example in supporting the NFU's campaign to achieve net zero farming by 2040 and encouraging the Department of Transport's initiative to remove fossil fuel powered vehicles from our roads by 2035 if possible rather than 2040 as currently planned.

I have this week joined colleagues from the Conservative Environment Network Parliamentary Caucus to write to the Prime Minister in support

of a green economic recovery from Covid-19. The letter urged the Government to back the British green industries of the future and low-carbon infrastructure projects, such as electric vehicle manufacturing, renewable energy projects, and home energy efficiency retrofits, to bring jobs to all corners of the country whilst also putting the UK on track to meeting its world-leading net zero emissions target.

In my role as chairman of the Environmental Audit Committee I remain determined to raise awareness of technological innovation and press the UK Government to achieve net zero Britain. As we head towards hosting COP26 next year, the UK has the unique opportunity for global leadership on these issues.

I wish to continue to explore new ideas and conversations about local changes we can all make, so please do feel to get in touch with me if your group has proposals.

Stay safe and well

Regards

Philip

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