

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Climate &
Ecological
Emergency
Bill Alliance

Copied:

Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, Secretary of State for Business
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Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you about the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill (CEE Bill), which was [introduced](#) as a presentation bill by Caroline Lucas MP on 2 September 2020. The CEE Bill offers the UK an unparalleled opportunity to provide much needed global leadership in addressing climate-nature breakdown and Earth system collapse—and to substantively strengthen a number of useful policy and budget commitments that you, and HM Government as a whole, have made in recent months.

We therefore respectfully request that, as a matter of the utmost urgency, HM Government:

1. Takes up the CEE Bill via the forthcoming Queen's Speech on 11 May and makes time available during the new Session to properly debate the Bill and allow it to progress
2. Adopts the 'nature clauses' of the Bill in its positioning at the UN Biodiversity Convention (COP15) in October and the 'climate clauses' in its positioning for the UN Climate Change Convention (COP26) in November.

We urge you to do so because of the nature and scale of the interlinked global, environmental, economic and social crises that confront humanity—and because there is no other parliamentary pathway for the House of Commons to properly debate and endorse the solutions outlined in the CEE Bill now that HM Government has effectively postponed Friday business and thus private members' bill agendas.

2021 is an auspicious year for the UK to play a world leading role as host to the G7 in June and co-host for COP26, and its attendance at COP15. President Biden has already made tackling climate change a top priority. The new US Administration has shown its substantive commitment by rejoining the 2015 Paris Agreement and holding a major economies [climate summit this week](#)—Earth Day, 22 April—as a precursor to COP26. President Biden has also committed to a net zero policy programme, of the type pioneered by the UK. This is a tremendous opportunity in which the UK can leverage the so-called 'special relationship' to create new levels of global ambition on tackling the climate crisis—especially now that the UK has exited the European Union.

These fortuitous developments can allow the UK to demonstrate to other nations what can and must be done to tackle the climate-nature crisis—and to forge a new global role in the post-pandemic world. To do this the UK must first up its own game, and address some glaring weaknesses in our otherwise positive climate-nature track record; or risk not being taken seriously at all.

While we welcome recent climate and nature policy initiatives from your Administration—including the diversion of £3 billion of existing [funds to nature conservation](#), the [Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution](#), your acceptance of the [Leaders' Pledge for Nature](#) and the new emissions reduction targets in the [Sixth Carbon Budget](#), plus a number of programmes outlined in HM Government's [response](#) to the Committee on Climate Change's (CCC) [2020 Progress Report to Parliament](#)—we must alert you to the fact that they are not nearly sufficient to ensure that the UK will fulfil its responsibilities under the UN Biodiversity Convention, the UN Climate Change Convention or the Paris Agreement. Two select committees in the House of Commons recently [echoed](#) this, calling on Ministers to produce more credible climate plans before COP26 in November.

There is so much more that the UK, and other nations, need to do to effectively address the looming Earth system crisis. As you may be aware, the Stockholm Resilience Centre has identified [nine critical planetary boundaries](#) related to key Earth-system processes and outcomes that primarily determine the conditions for life on Earth. Humanity is already transgressing four of these thresholds—those related to climate change, biodiversity loss, land use change and biogeochemical flows (phosphorus and nitrogen).

Breaking past one or more of these limits increases the risk of catastrophic Earth system shifts at the continental to global scale, inevitably causing extreme economic, social and political unrest—threatening the foundations of civilisation itself. These shifts will be abrupt and sudden; not gradual or manageable.

Climate system disruption and the destruction of natural systems is therefore [pushing us towards Earth system collapse](#). This forecast has been confirmed by a wide range of authoritative [reports](#) by world-leading scientists to political leaders in recent years. And yet, governments the world over have consistently shied away from the systemic transformations to the dominant economic growth models that are causing these existential threats to civilisation—including the UK. However, as the CCC's *Sixth Carbon Budget* demonstrates—as just one of many post-pandemic 'greening the economy' development paths, also highlighted by the [Dasgupta Review](#)—there is no contradiction between lowering emissions, regenerating nature and stimulating a more prosperous, wealth-creating economy.

We are therefore calling on HM Government to implement the necessary regulatory and fiscal frameworks to provide a consistent and reliable development trajectory—and to incentivise firms and consumers to work with your Administration—to deliver the changes required. HM Government's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for COP26—committing to reduce emissions by at least 68% by the end of this decade—is ambitious, but the policies and legislation [announced to date](#) are no guarantee that it will be met. When added together with other nations' NDCs, it is obvious that planned global emission reductions are nowhere near sufficient to meet the Paris-compliant 1.5 °C target. The UK cannot persuade other nations to sufficiently strengthen their own contributions if we are failing ourselves.

The current UK net zero target date of 2050 does not reflect [our global responsibility](#) and nor will it motivate the early action that is needed if the UK's remaining carbon budget is not to be exhausted long before that date. Despite the promise shown in the most recent Sixth Carbon Budget, the CCC has [established](#) that the UK's emission reduction pathway will not meet either our Fourth or Fifth Carbon Budgets—and yet must achieve 78% emission reductions on 1990 levels by 2035 to be on course for the *Sixth*. As you will be aware, these are [statutory obligations](#).

Furthermore, the CCC stated in its [2020 Progress Report](#) that only four of the 21 key indicators that show progress towards meeting our Fourth and Fifth Budgets—and the 2050 net zero target—were on track to be achieved. Only two of the 31 milestones for actions recommended by the CCC have been fully achieved, only partial progress made on 15, and 14 showed no progress at all. Perhaps most worryingly, the UK's [net zero by 2050 target is in itself not strong enough](#) to do our 'fair share' to meet [the 1.5 °C target](#) set out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Indeed, the CCC has identified that the UK's [net zero by 2050 plan](#) only gives us a 'better than 50%' chance of staying at or below the 1.5 °C target—and even then only if replicated across the world. We suggest that the route map set out by the CCC is flawed in three other critical respects, as it:

1. Places an unfair and heavy burden on future generations to deploy unproven negative emission technologies—which the CCC characterise as '[speculative](#)' with 'very low levels of readiness, very high costs and significant barriers to social acceptability'
2. Relies on unprecedented shifts in personal behaviour and lifestyle shifts to achieve its emission reduction targets, but without convincingly explaining how these may be effectively achieved
3. Assumes a disproportionately large slice of the global carbon budget for the UK to use—which far exceeds our 'fair share' as determined by the Paris Agreement and Convention principles.

Therefore, and to make this task both easier and more likely in the long run, there is no substitute for early, deep carbon reductions: HM Government's date of 2050 is therefore too late to be effective.

According to eminent climate scientists, the UK's carbon budgets used to determine emission reductions in the CCC's route map are two to three times as high as they should be—and the 2050 end date is 10 to 15 years too far away to deliver a fully Paris-compliant decarbonised energy-only economy (including aviation and shipping). For example, the cumulative emissions implied by CCC's [net zero pathway](#) are approximately 9GtCO₂ (excluding other GHGs). This is 2 to 3 times larger than the recent, peer-reviewed science [estimate](#) of the UK's fair Paris-compliant energy-economy carbon budget (2.7-3.8GtCO₂ from 2020) from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research.

In fact, if all nations were similarly to exceed their fair Paris-compliant carbon target, total global emissions would align with warming closer to 3 °C (than 2 °C). The implications for UK emission reductions are profound—we must achieve a minimum of 10% emission reductions every year beginning this year, with full decarbonisation of the energy system across all sectors by 2035-40.

Looking at the UK economy as a whole, the picture is yet more challenging. Starting from a global carbon budget—with an IPCC estimated 66% chance of limiting climate heating to 1.5 °C (which is Paris-compliant)—it is argued that the [remaining available carbon budget](#) for the UK is just 2.5GtCO₂. In order to meet our historical, present-day and future generational obligations to reduce emissions fairly, and to meet a zero carbon economy by 2050 (while remaining within our Paris-compliant carbon budget), the UK must achieve absolute reductions of more than 95% of carbon emissions by 2030-35. If the UK follows a non-linear emissions reduction development pathway, with year-on-year constant percentage reduction rates, this goal is achievable. We suggest that the problem is not a lack of [public support](#), money, technology, land use or lifestyle solutions; the problem is the delay in implementation.

As you know, every day, month and year counts in this mission. The longer we delay cutting emissions by sufficient year-on-year reductions which truly reflect our global carbon budget 'fair share', the harder it becomes to cut greater carbon loads in the years to come—and the more likely we help precipitate Earth system collapse, storing up ever more serious and expensive problems here at home—from debilitating extreme weather events, sea level rise and severe flooding.

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill offers a clear, evidenced-based statutory framework, which will fulfil the UK's international climate and nature responsibilities and positively steer public and private sector investment, procurement and purchasing decisions towards shifting to a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable society. This is because the CEE Bill sets a viable pathway for HM Government to:

1. Take a joined-up approach to addressing the climate and ecological emergencies
2. Ensure that the UK does its fair share to limit global heating to 1.5 °C, in line with the Paris Agreement—taking responsibility for its entire greenhouse gas footprint, including domestic and imported emissions from UK consumption—as well as emissions from international aviation and shipping
3. Protect nature along UK supply chains and actively conserve the environment within the UK by restoring abundant, biodiverse habitats and healthy ecosystems
4. Establish a representative Citizens' Assembly to advise Ministers and Parliament on a strategy to ensure a just and fair transition to a carbon-free and ecologically sustainable society.

As you know, every year the World Economic Forum [ranks](#) the ten greatest risks to humanity, gauged by how likely and how severe their knock-on impacts will be. As development impacts and climate heating cross the Earth's system tipping points, [change will be sudden, abrupt and catastrophic](#). In recognition of the dire position humanity finds itself in, a majority of UK local authorities have [declared climate emergencies](#). Over 230 councils have passed motions setting emission reduction targets of net zero by 2030 or earlier—and over 200 Councils are supporting actions to help achieve the 1.5°C target. Almost 50 of these authorities are also supporting the CEE Bill, alongside 118 Parliamentarians across the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

The UK garnered widespread applause at home and abroad for passing the Climate Change Act 2008, inspiring other nations to set and live up to serious climate commitments. Once again we need a world leading statutory framework to guide and motivate collaborative action across all sectors of the economy and society. We firmly believe that, in this pivotal year, you have an unprecedented opportunity to do so again by committing HM Government to implement the additional, essential measures required to meet our national and international biodiversity and climate obligations.

Prime Minister, it is for these reasons that we respectfully urge you to take up the CEE Bill and allow for full parliamentary scrutiny at the earliest opportunity. Your support will be a fitting way to demonstrate to the world what is needed to address the climate and nature crises at COP15, as host of the G7 summit and as co-host at COP26—and to meaningfully develop the important steps that you have taken to date following on from the UK Parliament’s [climate emergency resolution](#) in 2019.

[It is said](#) that this Government’s approach is defined, not by the words you use, but by the actions you take. We respectfully call on you to take the necessary actions outlined above and adopt, introduce and allow the CEE Bill to progress through Parliament. We, the supporters of the CEE Bill Alliance, are ready and willing to work with you—and we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

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 Richard High, Basic Income UK
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