

## **Identical Text received from 11 individuals –**

### **Written Evidence (LBC0223)**

There have been widespread and passionate pleas from across the country, and around the world, that the New Normal, after we start to recover from the COVID 19 pandemic, is not a return to the Old Normal. In particular, this should be seen as an opportunity for the world's governments to ensure that the measures they take to recover from COVID-19 will also combat Climate Change. It is crucial, therefore, to radically reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and NOT take short-term recovery measures that lock the country into high carbon emissions far into the future.

2. In April 2020, the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, called on the world's Governments to seize the opportunity to "build back better by creating more sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies" and proposed six climate-related actions to shape the recovery. The UN Climate Chief added "With this restart, a window of hope and opportunity opens ... an opportunity for nations to green their recovery packages and shape the 21st century economy in ways that are clean, green, healthy, safe and more resilient". (1)

3. In May 2020, in a letter to the Prime Minister, the Chair of the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) and the Chair of the Adaptation Committee advised the UK government on how climate policy can play a core part in the recovery from the COVID crisis. They set out specific climate mitigation and adaptation opportunities and recommended six principles for a resilient recovery. (2)

4. Also in May 2020, over 350 organisations (representing over 40 million health professionals) and over 4,500 individual health professionals from 90 different countries, wrote to the G20 leaders calling for a 'Healthy Recovery' from the COVID crisis. In an open letter they said "A truly healthy recovery will not allow pollution to continue to cloud the air we breathe and the water we drink. It will not permit unabated climate change and deforestation, potentially unleashing new health threats upon vulnerable populations." (3)

5. Perhaps most significantly, in late June 2020, Climate Assembly UK, the Citizens' Assembly that was established to advise UK government, issued an interim briefing on Covid-19 recovery and the path to net zero Carbon emissions.(16) Climate Assembly UK's members are very significant in that there is no other group that is at once representative of the UK population, and well-acquainted with the sorts of measures required to reach net zero Carbon emissions.

The results in the interim briefing show that:

- 79% of assembly members 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that, "Steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve net zero [Carbon emissions]";
- 93% of assembly members 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that, "As lockdown eases, government, employers and/or others should take steps to encourage lifestyles to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero [Carbon emissions]."

6. The degree of urgency could not be greater. The 2020 report to Parliament from the Committee on Climate Change (17) stated that all Departments should : "demonstrate adaptation planning for a minimum of 2°C and consideration of a 4°C global temperature rise (by 2100 from pre-industrial levels). [Bold emphasis added.] This statement is astonishing on at least two counts. Firstly, the UK Government seems to have given up on its commitment to the 2015 Paris agreement to keep global temperature rise "to well below 2 degrees Celsius (2°C ) above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius (1.5°C)". The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) subsequently released its SR15 Report (18) which warns how significantly worse the effects are likely to be between 1.5°C and 2°C. Secondly, the UK Government seems to consider that a 4°C rise is acceptable and manageable. By contrast, the widespread expert view is that a 4°C rise is short-hand for 'catastrophic and consistent with the global collapse of financial, political, social and ecological systems.'

7. The measures that the UK Government takes to ensure a social and economic recover from the COVID crisis must, therefore, have at their core the long-term condition of the planet, its structures and its finite thresholds. The COVID crisis has showed us that the world is capable of acting on the scale that is required to avoid climate and ecological catastrophe.

8. Solving acute short-term problems while at the same time ensuring long-term planetary sustainability is at the heart of the Climate Interactive policy of Multi-Solving. At the core of this approach is the rhetorical question 'How does me solving my problem help you to solve your problem?' The approach is most vividly set out in the 17 minute Ted Talk by Dr. Elizabeth Sawin (4) which anyone developing policy on recovery from the COVID crisis is strongly urged to watch. Amongst other Multi-Solving scenarios, Dr Sawin describes solving acute health problems at the same time as combating Climate Change.

9. A Multi-Solving approach seems to be ideally suited to achieving a social and economic recovery from the acute and harrowing COVID-19 crisis and at the same time combating the chronic and potentially catastrophic consequences of climate and ecological collapse. The number of deaths as a result of Climate Change and its causes and consequences is set to dwarf those from COVID-19 if we do not take critical action as a matter of great urgency to reduce global

carbon emissions. Further warming will continue for decades even after we begin to take serious action.

10. The number of people the World Health Organisation estimate die as a result of polluted air every year is over 7 million. Ambient air pollution alone caused some 4.2 million deaths in 2016, while household air pollution from cooking with polluting fuels and technologies caused an estimated 3.8 million deaths in the same period. (24) Improved air quality, with consequent reduction in both human and economic costs, is just one of the many co-benefits of moving to a greener economy.

11. The Welsh Assembly Government is to be congratulated for taking its ground breaking Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to the next level by joining the Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership (WEGo). In a 10 minute Ted Talk (5), Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland - which was one of the founder members of WEGo - sets out why governments must stop prioritising Gross Domestic Product (GDP) above all other considerations, and embrace the UN Sustainability Goals (6) which are at the heart of Wellbeing Economy Governments. There are a number of metrics other than GDP that already exist and are being successfully used. WEGo has set out 10 principles that Governments in the partnership can use to 'build back better' after the COVID crisis. (8) (9). It is reassuring that the UK Parliament has introduced its own Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill.

12. It is not sufficient for governments, either national or local, merely to cut the carbon emissions within its own buildings, institutions and structures which it has direct responsibility to manage. The UK Government and Devolved Administrations, as well as Local Government across the UK, must take the lead to encourage, facilitate and reward zero carbon measures across all aspects of society within its geographical borders. This includes all aspects of society from energy production to transport, from high-street shops to multi-national business, from individual citizens to entire towns and cities, and transition from a linear economy to a Circular Economy. This rather poses the question 'If they don't, who will?'

13. It is not sufficient for Governments merely to cut the Green House Gas emissions produced within its own geographic boundary, often referred to as its Production Emissions. These do not account for the GHG emissions that result from the goods and services consumed by its citizens: if someone buys a washing machine in the UK there are GHG emissions somewhere in the world associated with it. Air pollution does not recognise national borders. The Consumption Emissions for the UK takes imports and exports into account and includes emissions associated with goods, services and international travel resulting from people living in the UK. This gives a more honest way to describe the UK's contribution to global GHGs and its responsibilities to reduce them. In the case of the UK, its Consumption Emissions are both significantly higher than its Production Emissions and falling very much more slowly. The UK

Government must tell the truth about this. Failing to do so smacks of deception or, at best, creative accounting.

14. Countries and companies that extract fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) already have several times more proven mineral reserves than we can burn and still remain anywhere close to 2 °C of warming. (11) However, there are powerful individuals and organisations that are determined that these resources are brought to the surface and burned, otherwise they stand to lose trillions of US dollars. This represents a bitter conflict between recognising that these reserves MUST stay in the ground and the loss of these 'stranded assets' by a few powerful interests. (12) (13) It therefore becomes financially prudent, as well as a moral imperative, to ensure that public money is not tied up in this lose-lose conflict.

15. According to the Committee on Climate Change the UK's progress with GHG reductions are insufficient to meet its own targets. Moreover, these targets are inconsistent with keeping global warming below 2°C. (17)

16. Having a 'target date' for net zero carbon emissions is less important than recognising the concept of a Carbon Budget and the rate of reducing emissions necessary to keep within that budget. There is, therefore, an imperative to start emissions reductions NOW with the easiest cuts – the low hanging fruits – and build up to the harder asks. We simply do not have enough time to wait until we have a fully scoped master plan. Policy must state both target date and a reduction pathway i.e. the percentage rate of emissions reduction year on year. The proposed percentage rate of reduction varies from approximately 8% (UN 2019 Emissions Gap Report) (25) to 25% (CUSP) (15). Whichever proposal is chosen, the current UK rate of 2-3 % is hopelessly inadequate. (17)

17. Developing countries in the Global South account for a significant proportion of global Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, and this proportion is set to rise in coming years and decades.(22) The UK's contribution to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) helps these countries to 'leapfrog' high emissions technology such as coal fired electricity generation and move directly to clean renewable energy such as wind or solar power. Moreover, the multiplier effect means that each UK£ spent on ODA results in multiple UK£s saved globally in reduced climate change impacts such as severe weather events that impact us all. Similarly, comparatively small amounts of money, in global terms, spent in the poorest countries on prioritising education for girls and making contraception widely available enabling economic opportunities for women, as well as similar measures that are considered fundamental rights in richer countries, have a practical as well as a transparency significance in ensuring Climate Justice, which is enshrined in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Cutting UK Overseas Aid by

£2.9 billion, as announced in July 2020 (19) is a reckless short-term measure that will have significant repercussions globally as well as locally.

18. By contrast, rich countries such as the UK need to realise that, economically, they have already arrived: it is time to embrace the fruits of growth that have been achieved over many decades of struggle. In the words of Katherine Trebeck and Jeremy Williams in *The Economics of Arrival* (23) it's time for the UK to "make itself at home" socially and politically. In a society with high levels of inequality such as the UK, all demographics across the economic spectrum are adversely affected: the lowest struggle to sustain a reasonable standard of living; the top find it necessary to surround themselves with high security measures that impinge on their freedom; and middle income earners, across most rich countries at present, are stranded in a stagnating economy. While the poorest countries need to continue to grow their economies (22) the richest need to recalibrate economic purpose, strengthen social institutions and secure wellbeing for all of its citizens. (23)

19. Government funded retraining will be necessary for people whose jobs did not survive the COVID crisis. This is an opportunity to ensure that retraining prioritises emerging green industries such as renewable energy generation and housing refurbishment as part of a Green New Deal.

20. Not only will individual jobs be permanently lost but some high GHG emission businesses, currently struggling or in decline, will never recover. It is imperative that the government protects the employees of these businesses, not the business themselves. It makes no sense to temporarily prop up businesses that, by their very nature, will have diminishing importance in a low carbon economy.

21. Like many other countries around the world, the UK's political decision making processes are hindered by 'single term' policies, and 'party politics' which makes long-term decision making on complex problems such as Climate Change (and Brexit) extremely slow and difficult. Deliberative democracy mechanisms such as Citizens Assemblies are a proven way of 'breaking the log-jam' of intractable problems and providing the Government with a legitimate mandate to make the radical changes that are necessary in order to radically reduce our GHG emissions. They also ensure that society is supportive of the measures its government proposes to take. The UK Government can then send a clear message that Carbon emissions ARE going to be cut - starting NOW - not because government is imposing it but because UK citizens are recommending it.

22. The 2020 Citizens Convention on Climate in France produced impressive propositions in June 2020 (20). It is hoped that the UK Climate Assembly will be equally far-reaching. The structure ensures that individual assembly members are at least as well informed when they finally reach the voting stage in the procedure as politicians are when they vote, and commonly very much more so. However, the Assembly's mandate of Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050 is far too limiting. Dramatically more ambitious reductions are required. (15)

23. Measures to reduce carbon emissions by enough to give a reasonable chance of avoiding climate and ecological collapse need not cost the earth. In the Stern Review, former Chief Economist to the World Bank, Nicholas Stern advised the UK Government in 2006 (10), and has refined the advice since (22), that such measures would be eminently affordable (in the order of 1 - 3% of global GDP), whereas failing to do so would likely be cripplingly expensive (upwards of 15 - 20% of global GDP). Stern has confirmed these figures in subsequent publications. (15)

24. "Now is exactly the time to invest for low-carbon growth, the growth story of the future ..... The low-carbon transition is a sound and sensible way of emerging from post crisis stagnation". Nicholas Stern, former Chief Economist at the World Bank and former co-chair of the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, writing in 2015. (22)

25. We already have the technology and the expertise both to ensure that UK society and its economy recovers promptly and fully from the COVID-19 crisis AND to prevent global warming rising above 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels. (21) All that is required is the political will, foresight and the appropriate measures.

The measures the UK Government must take, listed under three headings – Tell The Truth, Act Now, and Beyond Conventional Politics, need to include:

Tell The Truth.

26. Publish Carbon emissions for the UK on a Consumption basis as well as on a Production basis and encourage the G20 countries to do the same.

27. Explore and adopt a new metric to sit along side Gross Domestic Product (GDP), drawing on the principles of Wellbeing Economy Government (WEGo) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. (6) GDP is fundamentally inadequate for conveying the truth about our current society and economy.

28. Divest fully and publicly from fossil fuel industries and use its influence to ensure that Devolved and Local Government also divest fully and publicly. The UK Government needs to be clear that promoting fossil; fuels is no longer acceptable.

Act Now.

29. Provide no unconditional financial bail-outs for high carbon intensity industries. That would merely lock us into a high carbon-dependency future.

30. Provide retraining opportunities in the renewable energy industries and elsewhere in the 'green economy'.

31. Promote 'low carbon intensity - high labour intensity' approaches. An example from the building sector would be the refurbishing of existing houses and other buildings rather than new buildings on green-field sites. An example from agriculture would be free-range poultry farming rather than Intensive Poultry Production (IPU).

32. Incentivise Job-sharing.

33. Encourage a shorter week.

34. Invest in public transport which has suffered because of the advice not to use it during the COVID crisis.

35. Encourage a Circular Economy across all levels of government and across UK society and the business sector which encourages 'reuse, refurbish, and recycle' as outlined, for example, by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. (14)

36. Increase Overseas Development Assistance.

37. Cut GHG emissions by anything from 8% to 25% year on year starting NOW. (15)

Beyond Conventional Politics.

38. Hold periodic Citizens Climate Assemblies to both provide the government with a clear mandate and to ensure that the government and wider society agree on the scale and urgency of the measures that are required to radically reduce our emissions of Green House Gasses.

Summary of Recommendations.

ALL of the above measures, and more, can be achieved if the UK Parliament enacts the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill (CEE Bill) (26) coming before Parliament promptly and in full.

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