



Department for  
Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Business,  
Energy & Industrial Strategy

Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP  
Chair, Environmental Audit Committee

By email: [eacom@parliament.uk](mailto:eacom@parliament.uk)

21 October 2020

*Dear Philip,*

I am writing to you following the session of the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) on 10<sup>th</sup> September, at which I gave evidence on matters related to COP26 and the UK's net zero target.

As set out in the session, the Government has already taken huge strides in bringing forward ambitious net zero policies across all sectors of the economy. Since March this year we have announced almost £1bn to support the transition to low-emissions vehicles and in July, we announced £3bn to improve the energy efficiency of homes and public buildings between 2020 and 2021. Internationally, the UK is working to reduce global emissions by increasing ambition as part of our COP26 Presidency. In spite of the Summit being postponed to November 2021, we are progressing our preparations for COP26 and maintaining momentum in engaging with UNFCCC Parties and international stakeholders. Ahead of the Summit we are also calling on all countries to submit ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions and net zero Long-Term Strategies.

The EAC raised a number of issues and I agreed to write with further detail in response to these points.

#### **Defra Peat and Tree Strategies**

Caroline Lucas MP asked for further detail regarding Defra's Peat and Tree strategies. The England Peat Strategy will be published later this autumn and will set out how we will reverse the decline in our peat, including through protection measures and restoration. As part of this we will be restoring 35,000ha of England's peatlands through the Nature for Climate Fund. Peatland restoration will contribute to the government's targets on nature recovery and to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, as well as making our peatlands more resilient to future climate change.

The government has always been clear about the need to phase out rotational burning of protected blanket bog to conserve these vulnerable habitats, and we are looking at how legislation could achieve this. Real progress is being made in promoting sustainable alternatives. We have urged landowners to adopt these and continue to work with them constructively.

The England Tree Strategy (ETS) will be published in the coming months following completion of public consultation in September 2020. The ETS will focus on expanding, protecting and improving our woodlands, and how trees and woodlands can connect people to nature, support the economy, combat climate change and recover biodiversity. It will set out our forestry policy through to 2050, outlining how we

will deliver England's portion of the 30,000ha per year of new tree planting in the UK by 2025 through our ambitious England tree planting programme, working with partners and key stakeholders to do so. The strategy will also outline how the Nature for Climate Fund can be best utilised to deliver environmental and social outcomes, including the critical role trees play in achieving net zero targets.

### **HMT Net Zero Review**

In response to a question from Jerome Mayhew MP, I committed to follow up in writing on any further information regarding the Treasury's Net Zero Review, particularly concerning publication timing. The Net Zero Review report will now be published in Spring 2021 and in the meantime, the Treasury will publish an interim report this Autumn. This will set out the approach to the Review and analysis which will inform the final report.

### **Green Homes Grant and home insulation materials**

Regarding the Chair's question as to whether BEIS can encourage take up of wool insulation as part of the Green Homes Grant, BEIS officials are discussing this issue with MHCLG and we will add further detail to the Simple Energy Advice website to highlight the alternative materials and products available for home insulation measures installed as part of the Green Homes Grant.

### **Hydrogen Buses as part of COP26 operations**

With regards to John McNally MP's question on green travel for COP26 and zero emission buses, a strategic objective of the transport plan for COP26 is to showcase world leading sustainable transport options and we are very actively working on a number of initiatives to support this. We will maximise the use of public transport and the Heads of State transport offer will be predominantly electric vehicles or hybrids. We will also offset all carbon emissions associated with running the event, including emissions from delegate travel, and are aiming to achieve ISO20121 certification, an international standard for sustainable events.

The details of the 4,000 British built Zero-Emission Buses (ZEBs) programme, including how funding will be distributed, will be announced in due course. The Government is in regular dialogue with bus manufacturers about this programme. The Minister responsible for buses, Baroness Vere, recently chaired a roundtable which was attended by the Chief Executives of the largest UK bus manufacturers, including Colin Robertson, the Chief Executive of Alexander Dennis, and this topic was on the agenda.

My officials in the COP26 Unit, Simon Sharpe [REDACTED] and Philippa Harvey [REDACTED], would be happy to answer further questions on this matter.

### **Floating offshore wind**

In your closing question at the session you mentioned that a reference had been made at the Committee's hearing on offshore wind (4 June 2020) to creating a separate pot for floating offshore wind in the forthcoming Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation round. At that hearing, Benj Sykes, Chair of the Offshore Wind Industry Council (OWIC) referred to the Government consulting on creating a separate pot for *floating offshore wind* in the forthcoming Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation round.<sup>1</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> In his evidence to the Committee, Benj Sykes said "...As Rebecca said earlier, the consultation that has just closed, looking at a separate Contract for Difference pot for floating wind in the next auction round...".

the consultation which we carried out earlier in the summer, we considered changing the CfD pot structure but to create a new pot for *conventional* offshore wind, not floating. The consultation did not contain any proposal for a separate pot for floating offshore wind. We are currently considering the responses to the consultation on the forthcoming Contracts for Difference allocation round. I plan to issue a formal government response shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of fluid, overlapping strokes that form a stylized representation of the name 'Alok Sharma'.

**THE RT HON ALOK SHARMA MP**  
Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy  
President Designate of COP26