



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

29th June 2020

Dear Constituent,

RE: A GREEN & FAIR RECOVERY FROM COVID-19.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of a green and fair recovery following the COVID-19 emergency; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

These have been very difficult times for our country and while it is paramount to protect jobs and the economy, I appreciate that questions are also being asked about the way the country does business in the future from an environmental perspective. I will therefore touch on the various issues raised in your correspondence.

First, I agree that as we recover from COVID-19, the Government needs to deliver an economy which is stronger, greener, more sustainable and more resilient. By doing this, we will protect jobs and add many more employment opportunities. I was therefore pleased that, on the 8th June, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy announced a Green Recovery Working Group - one of five new 'recovery roundtables' bringing together businesses, business representative groups and leading academics, to unleash Britain's growth potential and help the economy recover from the pandemic. This group will explore how to capture the economic growth opportunities from the shift to net-zero emissions.

I know questions have been raised about support for certain sectors. In the case of airlines, for example, firms can draw upon a range of financial support during this challenging time, including billions of pounds worth of loans and guarantees, tax deferrals and the furlough scheme for workers. The ministerial-led International Aviation Taskforce is looking at the best ways to support the industry, recognising the unique challenges it is facing. Rightly, any potential intervention would need to represent value for money for taxpayers.

In exceptional circumstances, where a viable company has exhausted all options and its failure would disproportionately harm the economy, I understand the Government may consider support on a 'last resort' basis.

More broadly, the UK has played a world-leading role in tackling climate change and the transition to 'Clean Growth', with the UK being the first country to legislate to eliminate our contribution to climate change by 2050, and the fastest in the G20 to cut emissions. Since 1990, the UK has cut emissions by more than 40 percent, while growing the economy by more than two thirds, and we are a world-leader in offshore wind.



At the same time, the *Environment Bill* is being introduced to protect and improve the environment for future generations, enshrining in law environmental principles and legally-binding targets, and the first progress report on the Government's ambitious *25 Year Environment Plan* found that 90 percent of the priority actions have been delivered, or are on track for delivery.

I am sure you are also aware that the Chancellor has introduced measures to support those who now find themselves without employment. I am encouraged that these measures include extra support for the welfare system through Working Tax Credit (WTC) and Universal Credit (UC). Both the UC standard allowance and the WTC basic element have been increased by £1,000 per year for the next 12 months. This equates to an additional £86.67 per month, on top of the planned annual uprating. Together, these measures represent an injection of £6.5 billion into the welfare system.

The UK also remains committed to being a world leader in tackling air pollution. As we rebuild our economy in response to COVID-19, we have a chance to shape a cleaner and greener society. While early signs show air pollution has dropped during the outbreak, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs has launched a call for evidence to ensure that they can fully understand the impact that COVID-19 is having on air quality for future policy development.

Building on considerable recent investments, Ministers have pledged to invest an additional £2 billion in cycling and walking and have committed to publish a national cycling plan, as well as an updated *Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy*. The first stage of this £2 billion investment will be a £250 million emergency active travel fund, which will deliver new pop-up cycle lanes with protected space for cycling, cycle and bus-only corridors, safer junctions and wider pavements. Furthermore, a £50 'Fix Your Bike Voucher' will be introduced, which is expected to help up to half-a-million people bring bikes out of retirement.

In addition, Government investment is supporting the transition to electric vehicles, with grants available for ultra-low emission vehicles, as well as funding to support charging point infrastructure. Ministers are also consulting on bringing forward an end to the sale of new petrol, diesel and hybrid cars and vans from 2040 to 2035, or earlier if a faster transition appears feasible. Trials of rental electric scooters have been brought forward too.

Furthermore, one quarter of fuel-poor households in England, sadly, includes someone who is a resident over 60. Improving energy efficiency is the best long-term solution to tackle fuel poverty and I am therefore pleased that the Government is rightly taking steps to ensure low income, vulnerable households, including older people, are protected from living in a cold home. The Energy Company Obligation Scheme (ECO) and its successor will drive £6 billion of additional investment to support energy improvements in low income and vulnerable households. Indeed, since the ECO



launched, more than 2 million households have benefited from energy efficiency measures.

I am also pleased that public parks have stayed open throughout this crisis to enable people to access green spaces, as spending time outdoors in natural open air is important for our physical and mental wellbeing. The Government has published comprehensive guidance on accessing green spaces safely, which is available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-on-accessing-green-spaces-safely>

As you can see from the above, the Government is taking extensive action to address the issues you have raised, but we are not complacent and I just want to reiterate in closing that reducing carbon emissions and tackling climate change will continue to be a top priority for me and my ministerial colleagues.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,
Tom

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
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