



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

Date: 3 August 2020

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Dear Secretary of State

Climate Change Commitments

We are writing to you on behalf of East Suffolk Council's Environment Task Group (ETG) and the East Suffolk Greenprint Forum (ESGF).

ESGF is a voluntary network of individuals, organisations, businesses and community groups founded in 1996 in response to the Rio Earth Summit. Their vision is to work with the people of East Suffolk to improve our quality of life and living standards whilst reducing our impact on the environment.

East Suffolk Council is the largest District Council by population in England looking after around 250,000 residents spread over 200 square miles (510sq km) including 49 miles (79km) of valuable yet vulnerable coastline. It comprises a mix of market towns, villages and hamlets together with the important strategic locations of Felixstowe and Lowestoft. It supports the offshore wind industry and is the home to Sizewell nuclear power station. The Council was formed in April 2019 by combining our two parent authorities of Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils. The strategic direction of this Conservative controlled council places the environmental agenda at the heart of all it seeks to do.

We fully support the Government in its climate change commitments and East Suffolk Council has declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has committed to working towards carbon neutrality across our own estate and operations by 2030 as well as to continue to play a key role as a member of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership in making the county of Suffolk carbon as a whole neutral by that date.

The Covid-19 pandemic provides the Government with a unique opportunity to bring about lasting

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changes that will help to protect our environment. We are therefore writing to you to urge that the economic recovery plans you are developing in the course of emerging from Covid-19 deliver a clean, green, and fair recovery, that creates quality employment, and builds a more sustainable, inclusive and adaptable society locally and nationally, in alignment both with the Government's climate commitments and with the ESGF's own vision "to improve our quality of life and living standards while reducing our environmental impact".

Whilst we accept that small changes by individuals can, if done consistently and by enough of us, add up to a significant impact, individuals are restricted to an extent in the changes that they can reasonably be expected to make due to systemic constraints. We therefore welcome the tone set recently by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps when he said "public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for our daily activities. We will use our cars less and be able to rely on a convenient, cost-effective and coherent public transport network".

In order for the ESGP to meet our ambitions in an effective way, and to enable East Suffolk Council to discharge its duties in a way fully consistent with its own Climate Emergency commitments, it will also be essential for all local councils to be provided with the correct framework, systems and resources to make our vision a reality, and this will only happen with your help.

What we are asking for from the Government:

- Enhanced powers to enable Planning Authorities to make decisions in full alignment with our Climate Emergency commitments, supported by Planning Guidance that requires that all new development is fit for the future, enhances biodiversity, and incorporates best practice and technology in energy efficiency and generation.
- Funding to support individuals directly affected by coastal erosion to enable them to be compensated for their loss and resettled elsewhere.
- Additional Government grants and subsidies to support the rapid uptake of energy efficiency measures and clean heating systems on a scale which will enable us to meet our carbon reduction commitments. We need to be encouraging property owners to plan ahead to make the transition from gas-fired boilers to heat pumps and solar PV water heating now.
- Tax incentives to ensure that new housing developments are zero-carbon.
- Acceleration of the decarbonisation of the Grid by Government disinvesting in fossil fuels and diverting that investment to renewables.
- Incentives and legislative controls to encourage the rapid transition from diesel and petrol vehicles to alternative clean modes of transport.
- A commitment to enable a modal shift from single-occupancy car journeys to public transport and, in particular, active travel such as walking and cycling given the additional benefits to health and wellbeing they bring. To enable local government to play their part in delivering this vision, the Government would need to:
 - Provide sufficient funding to large rural counties such as Suffolk specifically to deliver schemes to enable walking and cycling as realistic and attractive first choices for ordinary people making essential journeys such as commuting and shopping.
 - Commit to provide sufficient funding to counties like Suffolk to support a

comprehensive and effective network of public transport to connect our isolated rural communities and encourage people out of their cars.

- Meaningful measures to address over-consumption of resources and the throwaway culture:
 - To help avoid waste at source, implementation of Circular Economy principles, where waste is designed out, products are designed to be repairable, and built-in obsolescence is a thing of the past.
 - Where waste cannot be avoided, producers to be incentivised through taxes to ensure that all single-use packaging uses materials that are easily recycled.
 - Carbon ratings on all products to enable consumers to make informed purchasing decisions.
 - Urgent implementation of deposit return schemes on all single use glass and plastic bottles.
 - Steps to improve recycling that shift the emphasis from quantity, to quality.

As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic there is a real opportunity for change and central and local government need to act quickly to sustain and build on the new ways of living our lives which have resulted in such significant environmental improvements such as better air quality. We would therefore urge the Government to apply these lessons to the continuing global threat that is climate change, and view Covid-19 economic recovery plans as an opportunity to implement changes that will protect our environment and deliver on our climate change commitments.

We hope that this letter sets out our shared vision, and our suggestions for how we can work together to achieve this in a constructive way. We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely



**CLlr James Mallinder | Chair
Environment Task Group**



**Jane Healey | Chair
East Suffolk Greenprint Forum**



Copies to:

The Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey, MP for Suffolk Coastal

Peter Aldous, MP for Waveney

Dr Daniel Poulter, MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich