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29 July 2020

THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Patrick & Nancy,

Thank you for your letter of 30 January and for enclosing the Council for Science and Technology's report on net zero. I apologise for my delay in replying.

In the Conservative Party's manifesto, we clearly set out our vision to ensure that the United Kingdom has the world's most ambitious environmental programme. The Queen's Speech reaffirmed our commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The UK has led the world in its response to climate change, cutting emissions by 42 per cent while growing the economy by 73 per cent since 1990. I look forward to further grasping the opportunity to continue this leadership by hosting COP26 next year.

I welcome your recommendations and agree with much of what you have said. Taking a whole systems approach to deliver net zero will be particularly vital and the Energy White Paper will be an opportunity for us to set out how our thinking has progressed in this area. I also agree about the fundamental importance of this agenda being driven from the centre of Government and the critical role the Cabinet Committee on Climate Change will have in driving forward our work, and unifying and increasing ambition across all Government departments. You also rightly focus on the importance of Government taking a bold and mission-driven approach to innovation. I will look to the Net Zero Innovation Board to provide leadership and bring together different departments and public bodies to deliver this. The Government will also consider your recommendations on a new infrastructure investment bank, alongside ongoing work on the Infrastructure Finance Review.

Internationally, I very much agree with the importance of support for collaboration, innovation and capacity building. At the UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019, I announced a doubling of the UK's international climate finance (ICF) commitment to £11.6 billion between 2021-2026 to support developing countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change through capital investments, technical assistance, and research, development and demonstration.

As part of this commitment I also announced the £1 billion Ayrton Fund, which will support clean energy innovation and RD&D for the benefit of developing countries.

The ICF is also building strong partnerships with emerging economies and developing countries to help them to raise ambition ahead of COP26. Alongside the UK's aid investments, the UK is collaborating with other countries through Mission Innovation to advance clean energy innovation.

I always appreciate the important role and valuable advice provided by the CST and thank you for this report and others. I understand you met Kwasi Kwarteng at the start of March to discuss the report, and that represented an important first step in exploring and delivering on the valuable recommendations you have made. I look forward to further engagement as we recover from COVID-19.

Thank you, once again, for writing.

with love
Ben

Professor Sir Patrick Vallance & Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell