

The Rt Hon Liz Truss
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

My Ref: MG/ER

Your Ref:

Contact: Lucy Greenfield

Tel: 0191 433 3461

Date: 29 September 2022

Dear Prime Minister

Gateshead Council Request Government to Act on the Climate Emergency

Gateshead Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. We have set an ambitious target to be carbon neutral by 2030 (scope 1 and 2) as a Council, and also support the borough to be carbon neutral by the same timeframe. The Council has taken its responsibilities seriously and we have reduced our carbon emissions by 55% since 2010, have independent environmental audits providing a critical friend, we have adopted a Climate Emergency Action Plan, consulted on a Climate Strategy, and been pioneering with some of our energy projects including the largest mine water heat scheme in the UK.

In 2020 the Council carried out a resident survey on the climate emergency and 86% told us that they were concerned about the impact of climate change and 81% said that they supported the Council in taking climate action. We also asked who needs to take further climate action and 86% said that the government needed to. With this mandate from our local communities, Gateshead Council would implore you to take greater action to address the climate emergency.

We welcome your commitment to the net zero target, however, feel that there is more that can be done to achieve this at the same time as addressing some of the other worrying issues facing the UK such as the cost of living crisis and energy insecurity.

With coal mining as part of our Industrial heritage in Gateshead, we recognise the responsibilities we have in reversing the harm that fossil fuels have caused. We have started this reconciliation with the new innovations around harnessing the heat from our mines to heat our homes and businesses. We feel that the Government should also turn a new leaf and not increase the reliance on natural gas, off-shore or from fracking, but look to enhancing renewable and low carbon solutions, including decentralised energy and heat. In Gateshead we are home to innovative research in blending hydrogen into the gas network through the projects Integral and Hydeploy. These are the types of innovations that need to happen, at scale. Consideration should be given to amending national planning policy on on-shore wind generation to be more permissive.

Councillor Martin Gannon, Leader of the Council

Gateshead Council, Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead NE8 1HH

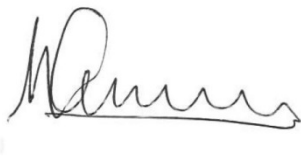
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We welcome the national requirements though building regulations to reduce carbon emissions in new development. The Council would like to seek assurance that net zero homes will be required at the soonest opportunity. In addition to requirements for new homes, we would like to see provisions for increased energy efficiency measures for existing homes that would not only reduce emissions, but also help those struggling with the cost of living.

Finally, we know that there needs to be a fundamental change to public transport. Transport is one of the largest contributors to carbon emissions, however investment is still focused on road infrastructure. In times where the average person is finding the cost of petrol and the cost of public transport a struggle to meet or as a luxury, we need to help our population and simultaneously help the planet. We look enviously to other countries in Europe that have provided free or extremely affordable public transport and the benefits that this brings for emission reduction, air quality improvement and also helping the cost of living and boosting the economy. Similar proposals in the UK, above and beyond the £2 single bus fare cap are essential to reducing transport emissions.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Martin Gannon
Leader of the Council