

27.02.15

Dear Prime Minister/Deputy Prime Minister/Mr Miliband,

We warmly welcome your announcement last week of a commitment to end the use of unabated coal for power generation as part of your wider pledge, together with the leaders of the other two main Westminster parties, to tackle climate change. This is a huge step in the right direction - removing coal emissions from our electricity sector is absolutely paramount if we are to meet our climate change commitments. We are writing to you to ask that you now follow this up by making a manifesto commitment to ensure unabated coal power stations are off the system by the early 2020s.

The announcement has attracted significant international attention at a time when momentum is building towards a potentially historic global climate change agreement in Paris at the end of the year. With coal the single biggest source of carbon pollution globally, China and the US have also outlined plans to tackle emissions from existing unabated coal plants - laying down an important marker ahead of the Paris summit. It is clear that our international partners will now be eager to see the detail of the UK's plan to phase out coal emissions.

As you will be aware, the recent high-profile report by the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, jointly commissioned by the UK, recommends that: *"high-income countries should commit now to end the building of new unabated coal-fired power generation and accelerate early retirement of existing unabated capacity"*.ⁱ Similarly, the Committee on Climate Change has said that in order to meet our legally binding climate change commitments *"there can be no role for conventional coal generation in the UK beyond the early 2020s."*ⁱⁱ

We are concerned though, that in the absence of a concrete and credible plan to take unabated coal power stations off the system, they will continue to emit carbon throughout the 2020s and beyond, threatening our efforts to tackle climate change and air pollution. Recent modelling by Imperial College London has shown that, without additional measures to tackle coal use, up to 9GW of unabated coal power could still be on the system in 2030, equivalent to around half the existing fleet.ⁱⁱⁱ

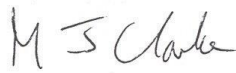
It was originally intended that the Carbon Price Floor (CPF) would perform this role, but the political context that led to CPF being frozen is unlikely to change by the end of the decade and there is widespread doubt in the energy industry about the Government's proposed post-2020 increases being implemented. As the modelling by Imperial demonstrates, this will see us miss, potentially by a very wide margin, the Committee on Climate Change's recommended goal of reducing electricity sector emissions to 50g CO₂ per kWh by 2030 – which it has identified as the most cost-effective route to meeting our climate change commitments.^{iv}

The UK has a huge opportunity to demonstrate that it is possible to phase out unabated coal and maintain a strong, secure and modern, industrial economy. Outlining a clear manifesto commitment to introduce regulations to phase out unabated coal by the early 2020s would help remove the threat that coal will jeopardise UK climate goals, while domestically providing certainty to investors in cleaner forms of energy.

Yours sincerely,



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Damien Morris
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Sandbag



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ⁱ <http://static.newclimateeconomy.report/TheNewClimateEconomyReport.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.theccc.org.uk/news-stories/no-role-for-conventional-coal-beyond-2020s-23-april-2009/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Imperial College London, *Could Retaining Old Coal Lead to a Policy Own Goal?* 2014

http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/wwf_coal_report_imperial_college_final.pdf?_ga=1.41147810.1665742166.1416851610