



26th October 2022

Dear Grant Shapps,

Congratulations on your new role.

We are calling on you to pause the Net Zero Review ordered by one of your predecessors and to revise its terms of reference. Frankly, as it is currently written, it looks like a thinly disguised attempt to prioritise profit making over action on the climate emergency.

The review was imposed after Prime Minister Truss prioritised growth at all costs in her disastrous mini-Budget. Although Liz Truss has gone, the review is still proceeding, with the explicit aim of redirecting efforts so they deliver “maximum economic growth”.

You can quickly display a commitment to the environment by ditching this wrong-headed and contradictory consultation and replacing it with a genuine engagement with civil society, business and local government on how to accelerate decarbonisation and adaptation in ways that deliver a fair transition for our communities away from fossil fuels.

The current Call for Evidence suggest government and local councils should prioritise unrestricted growth over efforts to prevent a climate disaster. The very first question in the consultation is: *‘How does net zero enable us to meet our economic growth target of 2.5% a year?’*

Our answer is: that’s the wrong question. It is contradictory and misguided. It makes achieving net zero the servant of economic growth, when our first priority must be to decarbonise if we are to have any kind of sustainable economy for the future.

Striving for net zero is itself an opportunity to create fairer and greener communities and strong local economies that can deliver improved health and wellbeing, greater equality, and better public services. A more resource-efficient economy can also allow nature to recover and thrive.

As Councillors, we know our councils could be leading on local action:

- in skilling up workers to insulate and retrofit buildings
- in developing local renewable energy generation
- in implementing Local Transport Plans that reduce traffic, clean up our air and make walking, cycling and public transport the most viable options – often based on the good work done in ‘Gear Change’, published by you when you were Transport Secretary.

However, the government has so far failed to provide local authorities with either sufficient funding or the right framework for this.

Despite the flawed nature of this review, we have been using it to call out the disastrous way funding rules have hampered decarbonisation efforts in our communities.

We have called for long-term, serious investment through local authorities in home insulation and public transport.

The government must also make local renewable energy investment much easier, ending our dependence on oil and gas and permanently reducing household and business energy bills.



Association of Green Councillors

Councils could then plan a pathway to net zero for their communities, which will give local firms the confidence to invest in green skills. This is the sort of local 'growth' that we really need.

We would welcome a genuine review of progress which looks to remove the obstacles and accelerate the delivery of net zero.

Yours Sincerely,

Catherine Braun; Leader, Stroud District Council

Siriol Hugh-Jones; Deputy Leader, Brighton and Hove Council

Zoe Nicholson; Deputy Leader, Lewes District Council

Natalie McVey; Deputy Leader, Malvern Hills District Council

Robin Bennett; Deputy Leader, South Oxfordshire District Council

Louis Stephen; Deputy Mayor, Worcester City Council

Steph Nissen; Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Colchester Borough Council

Lesley Whybrow; Cabinet Member for the Environment, Folkestone and Hythe District Council

Dian Toynbee; Cabinet member for Children's and Family Services and Young People's Attainment, Herefordshire Council

Ellie Chowns; Cabinet member for Environment and Economy, Herefordshire District Council

Johnny Denis; Cabinet member for Communities and Customers, Lewes District Council

Matthew Bird; Cabinet member for Sustainability, Lewes District Council

Nathan Goldup-John; Vice Chair, Democratic Services Committee, Neath Port Talbot Council

Bridget Petty; Executive Member for Climate Emergency, North Somerset District Council

Polly Gray, Climate Change Steering Group member, Rother District Council

Douglas Johnson; Chair, Housing Policy Committee, Sheffield City Council

Andrea Powell; Cabinet member for Corporate Services, Policy and Programmes, South Oxfordshire District Council

Chloe Turner; Chair, Environment Committee, Stroud District Council

Steve Williams; Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Waverley Borough Council

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Andrew Prosser; Cabinet Member for Climate Change, West Oxfordshire District Council

Karen Lewing; Vice-chair, Environment Committee, Worcester City Council

Marjory Bissett; Chair, Policy and Resources Committee, Worcester City Council

Denise Craghill; Executive member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods, York City Council