

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

28 July 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

Right now, millions of people are experiencing the deadly effects of extreme weather, from flash flooding in India, to wildfires in the United States, and extreme heat in the Mediterranean. The climate crisis is with us now – alongside the twin biodiversity crisis placing untold pressure on species and habitats around the world. The planet needs politicians to act urgently – not least, to protect people here in the UK, but also those across the world, who are being hardest hit by our changing climate.

At the last election, the Conservative Party manifesto put the 2050 net zero target front and centre. It did so because, as well as being the right thing to do, the environment remains a central concern for voters. Acting on climate change needs to be done fairly, but that is best done by delivering well-designed policy, backed up with public and private finance, and by working hand-in-hand with industry and communities. There is no public mandate for a delay.

It is therefore with deep alarm that we have read reports over the last few weeks of your government considering watering down its commitments on almost every front of environmental policy. Members of your party and government have questioned globally agreed science on the future role of oil and gas, opposed the 2030 phaseout of new petrol and diesel cars and vans, proposed weakening rules around energy efficiency, pressed pause on new systems to end the scourge of plastic waste, and cast into doubt our international global finance commitments.

This is all the more baffling as we know the costs of inaction on climate will significantly outweigh the costs of action. Renewable energy will protect millions of people from volatile global fossil fuel markets. Well insulated homes shield the elderly and vulnerable from sky-rocketing energy bills. Nutrient neutrality regulations help protect our rivers from dangerous pollution. Restoring woodland can protect communities from the devastating impact of flooding. And that is to say nothing of the economic opportunities in high-tech, low carbon industries. This agenda should be at the heart of your mission to strengthen the UK's economy.

Together, we represent more than 20 million supporters, who support us to speak up for the future of life on this one precious planet. We will not stand by whilst politicians use the environment as a political football. It is courage and leadership that we need now. In the past, we have mobilised many of our members collectively with extraordinary results, and our resolve to stand firm now against any and all attacks on this critical policy agenda remains absolute.

We therefore request an urgent meeting with you to discuss your response to the environmental crises – and in the meantime, we seek public reassurances on your commitment to taking the necessary action.

Yours sincerely,

Shaun Spiers, Executive Director, Green Alliance

Roger Mortlock, CEO, CPRE the countryside charity

Hugh Knowles & Miriam Turner, Co-Executive Directors, Friends of the Earth, England, Wales & Northern Ireland

Areeba Hamid and Will McCallum, Co-Executive Directors, Greenpeace UK

Sandy Luk, CEO, Marine Conservation Society

Hilary McGrady, Director General, National Trust

Beccy Speight, Chief Executive Officer, RSPB

Bronwen Smith-Thomas, Interim Co-Director, The Climate Coalition

Craig Bennett, Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trusts

Tessa Khan, Executive Director, Uplift

Sarah Fowler, Chief Executive, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

Richard Benwell, CEO, Wildlife and Countryside Link

Darren Moorcroft, Chief Executive Officer, Woodland Trust

Tanya Steele CBE, Chief Executive, WWF

Shane Tomlinson, co-CEO, E3G

Kyle Lischak, Head of UK, ClientEarth

Gideon Rabinowitz, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Bond

John Good, Acting CEO, ActionAid

Catherine Pettengell, Executive Director, Climate Action Network UK (CAN-UK)

Osai Ojigho, Director of Policy, Public Affairs and Campaigns, Christian Aid

Harpinder Collacott, Executive Director Europe, Mercy Corps

Gwen Hines, CEO, Save the Children UK

Sarah Roberts, Chief Executive Officer, Practical Action

Tim Wainwright, CEO, WaterAid UK

Tony Gent, Chief Executive Officer, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Sandra King, CEO, Beaver Trust

Clare Brook, CEO, Blue Marine Foundation

Will Travers OBE, Co-Founder and Executive President, Born Free Foundation

Gill Perkins, CEO, Bumblebee Conservation Trust

Julie Williams, CEO, Butterfly Conservation

Neil Redfern, Executive Director and Company Secretary, Council for British Archaeology

Jamie Christon, CEO, Chester Zoo

Rose O'Neill, CEO, Campaign for National Parks

Catherine Gunby, Executive Director, Fidra

Sonul Badiani-Hammett, UK Country Director, FOUR PAWS UK

Nick Jones, Executive Director, Humane Society International/UK

David Bunt, CEO, Institute of Fisheries Management
Matt Larsen-Daw, CEO, Mammal Society
Hugo Tagholm, Executive Director, Oceana UK
Jill Nelson, Chief Executive, People's Trust for Endangered Species
Ross Maloney, CEO, Ramblers
Christopher Price, Chief Executive Officer, Rare Breeds Survival Trust
Chris Sherwood, CEO, RSPCA
Helen Browning, group CEO, Soil Association
Henry Swithinbank, Policy And Research Manager, Surfers Against Sewage
Xavier Brice, Chief Executive, Sustrans
Paul Davies, CEO, The British Mountaineering Council
Darren York, Chief Executive, The Conservation Volunteers
Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary, The Open Spaces Society
Chris Butler-Stroud, CEO, Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Nick Measham, CEO, WildFish
Amy McDonnell, Co-Director, Zero Hour