The Rt Hon Louise Haigh MP
First Secretary of State and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Cabinet Office, 70 Whitehall
London SW1A 2AS

6 November 2026

Dear First Secretary of State,

The Zero Emission Vehicle mandate is one of the government's most important tools for building a stronger UK automotive industry in the long term, reducing the cost of motoring for consumers and improving public health. It is working: electric vehicles are gaining market share, bringing down costs for drivers and reducing our reliance on imported oil. Weakening the mandate now would undermine investment, jeopardise the UK's automotive future and leave households more exposed to volatile fossil fuel prices. The government should hold firm and build on the mandate's success, rather than dilute an effective policy.

The mandate is working and has sufficient flexibility. Almost one in three new cars sold in October was fully electric, and electric cars have taken 26.5 per cent of the market this year, ahead of the effective target of 24.6 per cent. The mandate has already been amended sufficiently, while the flexibilities beneath the headline targets can be adjusted to give manufacturers the room they need. There is no case for further weakening the targets themselves.

Jobs and industrial competitiveness. The mandate is not the threat to jobs that some parts of the industry suggest. More than 75 per cent of UK-built cars are exported and fall outside its scope. Compliance credits are also in surplus, meaning meeting the targets has never been cheaper. The real pressures on the industry are high energy costs, tariffs and international competition. Weakening the mandate may be the easiest lever to pull, but it will offer no lasting relief from these structural challenges. The same manufacturers will still face difficulties in a few years' time if these underlying issues are not addressed, while the UK will be left with a weaker industry and significantly diminished climate ambition.

There are greater opportunities to secure the industry's long-term future. Chief among these is UK inclusion in the EU's Made in Europe scheme. This may have appeared out of reach when the consultation opened, but it now has French and German backing and has been welcomed by No 10. Alongside this, the government should go further through the British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme to lower industrial energy costs and pursue a more targeted industrial strategy. These measures offer far greater and more lasting protection for UK jobs and investment.

Cost of living. New electric cars are now cheaper to buy on average than petrol cars and save drivers up to £1,400 a year. The Iran crisis this year, which saw diesel reach £2 a litre and petrol around 25p below that, demonstrated the impact of international oil price volatility on households and businesses. Maintaining the mandate could almost halve UK oil imports by 2040, helping break the link between international energy crises and everyday costs. By contrast, a 50 per cent target could leave drivers paying up to £4.5 billion a year more by 2035. Today's new cars will also become tomorrow's affordable used cars, making the transition increasingly accessible to more households.

Public health and climate. As members of the Healthy Air Coalition, including Green Alliance, set out in a letter to the Transport Secretary last month, petrol and diesel vehicles remain the largest single source of harmful nitrogen oxides in our towns and cities. The ZEV mandate is the only UK-wide transport policy capable of replacing them at scale. Air pollution already causes the equivalent of 30,000 deaths a year. The largest rollback option proposed in the consultation would add £882 million in air pollution damage, 12,000 life years lost and 595 extra hospital admissions.

There is also a wider question of the government's credibility on climate action. The Prime Minister said in August that "this is what climate change looks like, here and now" as wildfires ravaged parts of the UK. Yet with Jackdaw approved, Rosebank pending and the Warm Homes Plan scaled back, the gap between the government's climate commitments and actions is widening. Weakening the mandate would be the clearest demonstration yet of that contradiction, squandering the government's hard-won reputation on climate leadership. This is why more than 20 organisations, including ClientEarth, the RSPB and WWF, urged the Prime Minister to hold firm in June.

We also recognise the pressure being brought to bear on the government by parts of the automotive industry. But responding by weakening the mandate would prioritise short-term demands over the longer-term interests of UK workers, manufacturers and consumers. The government must look beyond immediate industry pressure and focus on the conditions needed for a competitive, resilient and successful UK automotive industry.

We therefore urge you to maintain the ZEV mandate targets unchanged, rule out further changes and focus instead on securing UK participation in Made in Europe, improving industrial competitiveness and delivering the demand-side measures that will help manufacturers and drivers make the switch. These are the steps that will provide the certainty, investment and lasting support the industry needs.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you or your team.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Davis
Chief Executive Officer