

16th November 2015

Dear Mr MacNeil,

Our organisations are writing to you to highlight our concerns about the direction of government policy with regard to the environmental impact of new buildings. We originally wrote to the Environmental Audit Committee regarding this issue and they have subsequently advised us to contact you.

The Government's productivity plan 'Fixing the Foundations', announced in July this year, removed the commitment for a zero-carbon building standard. This policy, originally announced by the Labour Government in 2006, had enjoyed cross-party support throughout the intervening years. Countless person-hours and many millions of pounds have been expended by Government and industry during this time. As a result of July's announcement, there is now no requirement for all new domestic and non-domestic buildings to achieve a zero-carbon standard from 2016 and 2019 respectively. By reversing previous policies, the Government have significantly undermined efforts to improve the energy efficiency of the UK's new buildings.

Not only will the changes hinder our ability to meet carbon budgets cost-effectively but also unnecessarily lock in higher running costs into future buildings, which will have a negative impact on the well-being of future users and residents.

The removal of the zero-carbon building standard will also have a significant impact on British businesses that over the last decade have made substantial investments in innovative products and practices to deliver zero carbon buildings. The removal of the long-term certainty that the previous framework had created means that a key opportunity to unlock private-sector, low carbon investment has been lost.

The removal of the zero carbon standard runs counter to advice from the Committee on Climate Change, which recommended in their annual progress report just a week before the Productivity Plan that 'the zero carbon standard should be implemented without further weakening'.

The backtracking on a world-leading zero carbon policy just before the Climate Change Summit in Paris this December runs counter to the UK's intention to assert strong leadership on achieving a global agreement on reducing climate warming.

The removal of the zero carbon standard runs contrary to recent progress that the UK has made towards sustainable development; we believe that a zero-carbon policy must be reinstated as a matter of urgency and we therefore ask you as Chair of the Energy and Climate Change Committee to take our views into consideration during the course of your current inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Joanne Wade, Director, Association for the Conservation of Energy

Sue Riddlestone OBE, CE and Co-Founder, Bioregional

Nick Clack, Senior Energy Campaigner, Campaign to Protect Rural England

Dr Neil G Cutland, Director, Cutland Consulting

David Weatherall, Housing Strategy Manager, Energy Saving Trust

Sophie Neuburg, Energy Campaigner, Friends of the Earth

Merlin Hyman, Chief Executive, Regen SW

Emilia Plotka, Royal Institute of British Architects

Trudi Elliott, Chief Executive, Royal Town Planning Institute

Mike Landy, Head of Policy, Solar Trade Association

Dave Sowden, Chief Executive, Sustainable Energy Association

Dr Hugh Ellis, Head of Policy, Town and Country Planning Association

Trevor Hutchings, Director, WWF-UK