



Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Her Majesty's Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

16 June 2020

Dear Chancellor

We are writing as Chair and Deputy Chair of the London Climate Change Partnership to highlight the urgent need for the Government's economic recovery package from the COVID-19 crisis to prioritise investments in measures to improve the resilience of the UK's major cities, particularly London, to the current and future impacts of climate change.

The London Climate Change Partnership is the centre for expertise on climate change adaptation and resilience to extreme weather in London. We have 32 partner organisations across a wide range of sectors, which help to shape our work programme, share knowledge, carry out research and develop solutions. We have established a number of working groups addressing issues such as the resilience and sustainability of London's health sector, climate change adaptation indicators for London, and heat risk in London, and our network extends beyond London to champions of climate resilience throughout the UK and internationally.

One of the main lessons from the current crisis is that the UK is vulnerable and exposed to global threats, including pandemics and climate change. It is vitally important that the recovery make the UK more resilient to these risks.

As the UK's major cities are centres of economic growth as well as concentrations of risk, their future resilience is central to re-building a robust and dynamic national economy. The Government's strategic priority of levelling up across the country, for instance, will be more difficult to achieve if the economies of our cities do not adapt to the changing climate. For instance, the UK economy already suffers more than £1 billion in losses every year on average from the effects of flooding, and homes and businesses in cities can be particularly hard hit.

London and our other major cities face elevated and growing risks as a result of climate change, particularly heat stress (due to the urban heat island effect), surface water flooding (due to the complexities of urban drainage systems and extensive impermeable surfaces), and water shortages (due to higher likelihoods of summer droughts disrupting supplies as population growth increases demand). These climate-related risks also have implications for the management of other risks affecting cities, such as terrorism and pandemics.

It is imperative that our cities adapt as our climate will continue to change for the foreseeable future. Only when global greenhouse gas emissions reach net zero will our climate start to stabilise. Even if the world is successful in implementing the Paris Agreement, reaching global net zero emissions in the second half of this century, we still face many decades more of warming and associated impacts due to past and ongoing emissions. The economic recovery could undermine the UK's long-term prosperity and well-being if investment fails to consider climate change and thus locks in vulnerability to its impacts.

As Lord Deben and Baroness Brown of the Committee on Climate Change pointed out in their letter to the Prime Minister on 6 May, climate investments can be used to support the economic recovery and to create jobs because many are labour-intensive, spread geographically across the UK, and have high multiplier effects. This investment must include not just reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, but also adaptation to those impacts of climate change that cannot now be avoided.

City councils and mayors should be able to identify climate change adaptation and resilience projects which can be brought forward for investment now, such as sustainable urban drainage systems and flood defences. Buildings need particular attention, with one in five homes being prone to overheating even during normal summers, according to the Committee on Climate Change. Investment programmes to make homes and businesses zero-carbon and climate-resilient should be treated as national infrastructure projects that are developed in partnership with local government.

It is important that all investments, whether explicitly climate-related or not, are assessed in terms of the risks that both climate change impacts and the transition to a zero-carbon economy pose to them. This type of assessment is now expected of the finance sector through the recommendations of the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures, and the Government should adopt the same approach in its investments. The UK cannot afford to invest in projects that will cease to be viable within their projected lifespans. This particularly applies to infrastructure, as the National Infrastructure Commission emphasised in its report last month. Investments need to be supported by policies, regulations and standards that promote zero-carbon and climate-resilient development and growth.

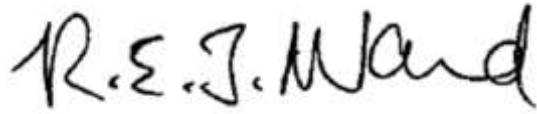
Finally, a small but very cost-effective investment for the recovery package would be the creation of sub-national expert networks, with members drawn from the public, private and third sectors, to inform decision-making in the public and private sectors in cities about climate change adaptation and resilience. As Chair and Co-Chair of the London Climate Change Partnership, which is funded by the Greater London Authority, we can attest to the critical importance of such networks to advance the economic resilience of our cities.

We are copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, as the member of the Cabinet who oversees climate change adaptation, and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who we hope will also support the case that we have presented here.

Yours sincerely,



Louise Pryor
Chair, London Climate Change Partnership



Bob Ward
Deputy Chair, London Climate Change Partnership

cc Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy