

NATIONAL
HOUSING
FEDERATION



Centre for
Ageing Better



Rt



GREENPEACE



The
countryside
charity



Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1 2AA

29 June, 2020

Dear Prime Minister

We are writing to ask you to increase investment in the UK building stock during the economic recovery phase of this crisis, to save lives, reduce the pressure on our stretched health services, improve homes and communities, deliver jobs, reduce emissions and increase resilience, whilst 'levelling up' regional inequalities.

We welcome your recognition of the importance of embedding green measures into the planned economic recovery. It is widely recognised, for example by recent work from Oxford University and LSE, that this is one of the best routes to boosting employment during this phase of economic recovery. It is also vitally important that as we emerge from this crisis we do whatever we can to mitigate the fast evolving climate crisis. We, the undersigned, urge that a historic and

transformative investment in the insulation and heating of the UK's housing and buildings forms an integral part of the government's plan to mitigate the economic impact from coronavirus. We cannot build back better if we do not invest in our buildings and homes, so that they protect and nurture peoples' health and the environment instead of damaging it.

We understand that the government is seeking ideas for shovel ready projects that drive forward the green recovery. It is our strong contention that dealing with insulation and clean heating should be at the centre of this effort. With the social housing sector taking the lead and priority assistance provided for fuel poor households living in private tenure homes, it can simultaneously help tackle the economic and unemployment crisis, the tragedy of deaths and ill-health caused by fuel poverty and the climate emergency.

A large-scale programme in its first years could create an additional 220,000 jobs across the UK. Moreover, it has been estimated that the Treasury would receive £1.27 in tax revenue for every £1 invested. Jobs in this sector would be geographically spread and replacing imported gas with home-grown electricity and insulation grows the economy and builds resilience.

Over the past five years almost 58,000 people across the UK have died from conditions attributable to cold homes, a completely avoidable catastrophe and amongst the worst rates in Europe. The cost to the NHS of health conditions made worse by poor housing is acute. Not counting the costs to social care services arising from poorly ventilated, badly insulated, unhealthy homes – it is estimated the poor housing costs the NHS between £1.4 and £2.0 billion per year in England alone, with the cost of productivity loss (including consequent lost education and employment opportunities) potentially as high as £18.6 billion.

Those impacted are often the same groups most badly affected by the coronavirus, with Public Health England (PHE) declaring that there is "clear evidence on the links between cold temperatures and respiratory problems". Whilst there is currently no cure for Covid-19, the UK's housing stock can and must be improved. Cold and polluted homes are preventable and improvements in energy efficiency can help stimulate the economy, save lives and address the financial impact of the current crisis, especially when this activity is targeted at those most in need.

Increased action in this area would also help with the government's green ambitions. Homes are currently responsible for one fifth of the UK's total greenhouse gas emissions. Without insulating and sustainably heating the UK's homes meeting carbon targets will be impossible, ceding International leadership as we approach critical COP26 climate meetings next year.

The case for acting on housing Insulation and heating is incontrovertible; therefore we ask that the government:

- Immediately kick-start a nationwide home and public sector energy efficiency retrofitting programme, starting with fuel poor households and social housing by implementing in full the policies and investment promised as part of the Conservative Party manifesto and with a significant role for locally orchestrated delivery
- Set out a comprehensive strategy and roadmap to 2050, and additional energy efficiency incentives for landlords and homeowners designed to leverage private investment and help support the aim to reach net zero. Establish and sufficiently fund a new Warm Homes Agency to provide market confidence and encourage private investment by

- supporting, enforcing and guaranteeing the delivery of targets and regulations for building efficiency and low carbon heating.
- Invest up to £2.5 billion in low carbon heating to drive the uptake of heat pumps and heat networks, enlarging supply chains in preparation for wide rollout of technologies in before mid-2020s.

A government programme to bring the UK's buildings and housing up to standard will create hundreds of thousands of jobs, increase the UK's resilience to environmental and economic shocks, build UK expertise in advanced environmental technologies and reduce the economic hardship of those hit hardest by coronavirus and the associated economic crisis.

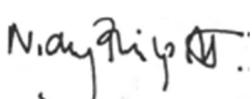
We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or a member of your team to discuss this further and set out how we could work collaboratively on our shared ambition for a green recovery.

Yours sincerely,



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Cc Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Kemi Badenoch MP, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury