

Thank you for contacting me about the UK's carbon targets.

First, I would like to assure you that decarbonisation does not mean deindustrialisation. Moving to a low-carbon economy is an important part of the UK's long term prosperity and by moving to a more efficient, sustainable economy, the UK will become less reliant on imported fossil fuels and less exposed to volatile energy prices in the future.

As you are aware, the Climate Change Act 2008 established a long term framework for reducing the UK's carbon emissions. In December the Government published a 'Carbon Plan' laying out the UK's progress in meeting these targets. This report highlights the emission reductions caused by the replacement of large numbers of coal-fired power stations with gas fired stations, the increase in the UK's renewable generation capacity and the development of nuclear which now provides 16 per cent of total UK electricity. Alongside this, it stated that industrial emissions have fallen by 46 per cent and emissions from buildings have dropped by a further 18 per cent.

However, I do appreciate that if we are to cut the UK's emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, there will have to be major changes in how we use and generate electricity. That is why the Government is introducing the Green Deal, which will dramatically increase the energy efficiency of British homes. The Government is also reforming the electricity market to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and increase our use of clean energy such as nuclear, clean coal and gas, marine and offshore wind. Green technologies will need to be developed and deployed and the electricity grid will need to become larger and smarter at balancing demand and supply. More information on this progress can be found on the Department of Energy and Climate Change's website at: www.decc.gov.uk.

I hope you will agree that climate change is a global problem. That is why I am delighted that at the UN Climate Change conference in Durban last year, over 120 developed and developing countries were able to join together and agree a global roadmap to a legally binding emissions reduction agreement by 2015. As well, I can pass on that China's low-carbon and environmental market is the second largest in the world and it is aiming to produce 16 per cent of its primary energy from renewable sources by 2020.

Finally, I would like to highlight the opportunities presented by a low-carbon economy. The low-carbon and environmental goods and services sector has been valued at £3.2 trillion a year and new research from the Renewable Energy Association has revealed that the UK's green economy could support 400,000 jobs across the supply chain by 2020.

Whilst there are undoubtedly some major uncertainties and challenges ahead, I hope you agree that national energy security and economic growth are inextricably linked to a low-carbon future. With this in mind, I believe that the UK should take advantage of the opportunities presented by this growing sector.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely