

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

June 2020

Dear Constituent

Thank you for your email.

These are incredibly difficult times for the country and while it is paramount to protect jobs and the economy, questions are also being asked about the way the country does business. The Government's immediate focus must be on supporting people and businesses through this difficult period. That is why we announced an extension to the furlough scheme, which has already saved millions of jobs.

Given the unprecedented economic context and the challenges facing the UK economy, the Government will take stock of the economy and public finances as we exit the current crisis and make the right decisions at that point. It is premature to speculate about future public finances, budgets and the economy. We are thinking first and foremost about protecting people's health, their jobs and supporting businesses. The Office of Budget Responsibility and the Bank of England have said if we did not do what we are doing today the costs in the future would be far higher.

That said, I do agree that as we recover from Covid-19, the Government needs to deliver an economy which is stronger, greener, more sustainable and more resilient. I was therefore pleased that, on 8 June, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy announced a Green Recovery working group, one of five new 'recovery roundtables' bringing together businesses, business representative groups and leading academics, to unleash Britain's growth potential and help the economy recover from the pandemic. This group will explore how to capture the economic growth opportunities from the shift to net zero emissions.

The UK has played a world-leading role in tackling climate change and the transition to Clean Growth, with the UK being the first country to legislate to eliminate our contribution to climate change by 2050, and the fastest in the G20 to cut emissions. Since 1990, the UK has cut emissions by more than 40 per cent while growing the economy by more than two thirds, and we are a world-leader in offshore wind.

At the same time, the Environment Bill is being introduced to protect and improve the environment for future generations, enshrining in law environmental principles and legally binding targets, and the first progress report of the Government's ambitious 25 Year Environment Plan found that 90 per cent of the priority actions have been delivered or are on track for delivery.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

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I understand that Ministers will seek to take action across all sectors of our economy. Renewable electricity generation has more than quadrupled since 2010. It now gives us 38.9% of our total electricity and for the first time exceeds the share of generation from gas. Using research and innovation to reduce the costs of meeting net zero will be essential and will put the UK at the forefront of the new technologies needed to decarbonise the economy.

The Spring Budget therefore committed to at least doubling the size of the Energy Innovation Programme. We will also create a carbon capture and storage infrastructure fund to establish this technology in at least two sites by 2030.

To encourage greener modes of transport, Ministers have introduced a £250 million emergency active travel fund so that people can use cycle and walking routes while public transport is more difficult for them to use during this pandemic. This will encourage them not to return immediately to their cars. The Covid pandemic has introduced new ways of working, that reduce the demand for transport. To do that, we must recognise that the digital infrastructure is just as important as our physical infrastructure. The Government's existing superfast broadband programme has shifted its focus to delivering gigabit-capable broadband and has already delivered full fibre to more than 370,000 premises. The Government have also committed to ambitious targets to increase zero-emission vehicles on the roads and are consulting on bringing forward the phasing out of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2035 to 2040. On air quality, the Spring Budget allocated an additional £304 million to enable local authorities to take immediate steps to reduce nitrogen dioxide emissions, bringing the total funding to £880 million.

Last year Ministers launched the Government's Green Finance Strategy, with an ambition to align private sector financial flows with clean, environmentally sustainable and resilient growth and to strengthen the competitiveness of the UK financial sector. We have also worked with the City of London to launch the Green Finance Institute to cement the UK's position as a global hub for green finance. I welcomed this move and the continued work of Ministers as they put environmental policy at the heart of our recovery after the pandemic has passed.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Gibson', written in a cursive style.

PETER GIBSON MP