



Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA



16 August 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing in response to the recent open letter from the First Minister of Scotland to you concerning the climate emergency.

Earlier this year the Senedd agreed to increase Wales's statutory climate targets in line with recommendations from the Climate Change Committee (CCC). Wales now has an ambitious net zero target for 2050, along with a 63% target for 2030 and an 89% target for 2040. We will publish our next decarbonisation action plan ahead of COP26, setting out how Wales will play its full part in global efforts to tackle the climate emergency and leave no-one behind as we transition to a cleaner, fairer and stronger Wales.

As is the case in Scotland, the Welsh Government is committed to using devolved powers to achieve both Welsh and UK statutory carbon budgets and targets. Like Scotland, we are reliant on UK Government action in non-devolved areas. By way of illustration, the CCC's Balanced Pathway identifies around 75% of the emissions abatement required in Wales during the 2020s as occurring in policy areas 'mostly reserved' to the UK Government.¹

I welcome the increased ministerial and official-level dialogue on climate matters we have seen in the last 12 months or so. However, I believe the First Minister of Scotland is right to suggest we can and must do more – not only to ensure we stimulate the wide-ranging action needed to meet our ambitious targets but also to exemplify co-operation across political and national boundaries. I therefore fully support the First Minister of Scotland's suggestion of a four nations summit ahead of COP26.

It is clear from Ms Sturgeon's letter that the UK Government's role in the management of fossil fuels across the UK is a key area where urgent action is essential. Coal is a core part of Wales's industrial and social heritage and, while I plan to write separately about the

¹ [The Sixth Carbon Budget – The UK's Path to Net Zero](#) (Climate Change Committee, 2020)

management of coal tips, I am keen for our abandoned coal mines to play a part in the net zero transition by providing renewable heat. While I am encouraged by the Coal Authority's willingness to work with us and local authorities on this matter, the Coal Authority's broader statutory duty to maintain and develop a coal extraction industry contradicts the Welsh Government's coal policy and jeopardises our statutory climate targets.

The current situation has encouraged mine operators in Wales to develop plans for further coal extraction, creating confusion for coal mine operators but also for the wider public, who rightly expect to see mine operations rapidly winding down. It also has the potential to delay efforts to decarbonise energy production. I am therefore asking that you modify the Coal Industry Act 1994 to remove this statutory duty, reflecting the demands of the climate emergency.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Wales, the First Minister of Scotland and the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MARK DRAKEFORD