Dear Candidate,

I am writing to you as Chair of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change, which brings together over 650,000 health professionals working in the NHS across the UK. We have 22 member organisations including the royal colleges of physicians, surgeons, nursing, and general practitioners as well as the British Medical Association. Together we advocate for responses to climate change which simultaneously improve public health.

We congratulate you on having the commitment and courage to stand for public office and hope that you will make action on climate change a priority. The harms from climate change are already here, and action is needed at every level from the global through the national, city and region to the individual to reduce this harm.

As health professionals we think it’s essential to continue to strive to keep the global increase in temperature to below an increase of 1.5°C on pre-industrial levels. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that beyond this level it will not be possible to halt the increasing impact of climate change on health, through flooding, heatwaves, food insecurity, the increasing spread of infectious diseases, and other harms.

That is why we call for the following:

- All countries to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 with countries with high emissions (including the UK) making much bigger cuts than those with low emissions
- Countries with the greatest responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions (mostly high income countries like the UK) to transfer funds to countries that are most vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis, enabling them to adapt and prepare
- All fossil fuel subsidies to end (while protecting the vulnerable who may be unfairly disadvantaged) coupled with a massive investment in renewable energy and storage, green infrastructure, and green jobs
- All fossil fuel companies to become net-zero by 2040
- All health services to become net-zero as soon as possible and before 2040

With over 80% of the UK population now living in urban areas¹, actions at city and city-region level can have, and already have, a positive effect on the UK’s overall emissions. We also know that **an overwhelming majority (80%) of people across the UK are concerned about climate change**, according to a poll conducted in March 2019 by BEIS².

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² Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2019. [Beis Public Attitudes Tracker](https://beis.gov.uk/policyThemes/environmentAndClimateTacklingClimateChange/beis-pat/wave-29) (Wave 29)
Now, we need city leaders’ ambition for climate action to match the high levels of concern among the public. While the UK Government has set a target for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 at the latest, this must be supported by, and could be surpassed by city-region level plans.

‘1.5°C compatible’ plans for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 are already in place in many city-regions including Newcastle, Bristol and London. These are among the first such plans in the world but, while they exist, they will not be delivered unless they are prioritised by local leaders. Where they do not, now is the time to be urgently making them, to protect the health of people across the country.

One way in which progress can be made to rapidly reduce emissions, and to improve health, is the re-ignition of plans for clean air zones - many of which have been shelved due to the coronavirus pandemic. As we face an unstable financial situation for several years to come, reducing the burden of ill health on public expenditure will also be a welcome result of such action.

In this way, and in all areas of your work, we ask that you support local and national government, the NHS, civil society, and business to take urgent action to avert 1.5°C warming and protect health.

You can find our calls to action in full on our website, along with our six principles for a healthy and green recovery and our proposals for recovery of the health and social care system.

We wish you luck in your campaign and hope that you will raise climate change with your fellow candidates and will prioritise it in your work if you are elected.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Richard Smith CBE FMedSci FRCGP
Chair, UK Health Alliance on Climate Change