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 in Wales and 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 to the national and 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 Wales and the UK) making much bigger cuts than those with low emissions
- Countries with the greatest responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions (mostly high income countries) 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

In many ways Wales has led the way in actions to promote environmental and human health. Since becoming the first parliament in the world to declare a ‘climate emergency’ The Senedd has made a number of commitments and has taken action in response, including a 100-point plan to decarbonise the economy, an adaptation plan to the unavoidable threats of climate change, and a commitment to considering the environment in all policy-making processes through the Future Generations Act.
By incorporating a goal to build a globally responsible Wales, the Act acknowledges the importance of considering human wellbeing as being intrinsically connected to the wellbeing of the environment. While climate change will damage health, and exacerbate existing health inequalities, if unabated, in tackling the climate emergency we have an opportunity to simultaneously improve the health of the Welsh people and to address these inequalities.

We also know that an increasing majority (76%) of Welsh people are concerned about climate change; the most recent polling data from ONS (2018-19) shows a 10% increase in the percentage of people who say they are concerned about climate change in less than two years.¹

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 in the Parliament if you are elected.

Yours sincerely,

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

¹ Welsh Government / Statistics for Wales, 2019. National Survey for Wales, 2018-19: Climate change and environmental action