

Letter to MPs over Parliament's failure to act appropriately on climate change and on the House of Commons mass absence during the only debate on this topic for 2 years.

Monday 4 March 2019.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ [MP for \_\_\_\_\_].

We are your constituents. Some of us voted for you. As our MP, we wish to make you aware of our grave concerns and disappointment at the absence by approximately 607 of the 650 elected MPs, for the climate debate in the House of Commons on Thursday February 28.

We are aware you might have been attending something else that day, perhaps an appointment that had been arranged some time in advance. However, it is nevertheless the case that this was the first debate on climate change in the House of Commons for two years, and as such the only opportunity to raise the urgency of our existential crisis with Government and among those of you who are paid and elected to serve the nation's best interests. We wish to remind you that there is no issue more important or urgent in the nation's interest than strong leadership to tackle global warming by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

According to Hansard, the climate debate was called directly as a result of thousands of school children going on strike last month, demanding faster and stronger action by Parliament. It is likely that hundreds of children in your constituency were among those on the strike, which was called because of Government inaction – a notion that was reinforced by the appalling MP absenteeism on Thursday.

Rather hypocritically, several MPs and teachers had publicly criticised those children for being absent from school. Those children now have every right to be furious by the absence of so many MPs in Parliament. They deserve an explanation along with a promise to take action in some way to rectify this mass dereliction of public duty.

Whilst we recognise and respect that MPs have a busy diary and responsibilities outside of Westminster, and whilst we realise those are important, many events can very often still go ahead without an MP being present, or be postponed, when matters of more urgency arise.

We are aware from speaking to staff at the House of Commons on Friday, of the following information, which also raises questions and concerns:

1. We have been informed by staff in Parliament that there is no publicly available record of MPs attending sessions in Parliament unless they speak; only then does their presence get recorded in Hansard. MPs are not obliged to say when and how often they attend Parliament. We suggest this approach is not good for public transparency and accountability of elected and publicly funded MPs.

2. We have been advised that House of Commons business is typically only timetabled about 1 - 2 weeks in advance. By then, obviously, many MPs' diaries are likely to be rather full. We suggest this is not good for ensuring that important matters are well represented or that democratic, strong, effective, representative and efficient governance is being achieved.

3. We have also been informed that most House of Commons debates like the climate one on Thursday do not offer a vote / motion / action / recommendation / solution to an issue. They merely acknowledge in Hansard that the House debated it. We suggest this approach must result in inefficient and ineffective use of Parliament's time.

4. The conclusions we have drawn from the available information on the late timetabling are that all 650 MPs have little real idea of when they really must be in Parliament to tackle the most important matters until the last minute; and that much of this time is given to inactionable purpose without a likelihood of a positive outcome.

5. Furthermore, it would appear that that when / if MPs do manage to turn up at short notice for last minute debates like the climate change one, nothing solid gets achieved unless it is one of the Government's own directed sessions associated with an action such as a Bill or vote. The conclusion we draw is that it is no wonder that progress on climate change is so slow; and that we currently have a very poor and inefficient method of governing our country. We ask: is there a better way that Parliament should run its business?

6. Given the mass absence by MPs, the lack of action on climate change and wider environmental crises facing our country, we are also concerned that perhaps a large number of MPs in the House might not have had the benefit of a higher education in science, and are really rather unaware of the severity and urgency of our predicament and why they should be prioritising these issues.

#### OUR REQUESTS

1. We are seeking a commitment from you as our MP to please raise all of these matters in the House of Commons at the earliest opportunity, either through a question, motion or debate or appropriate other means.

2. We request that you use your influence to ensure another debate is called in the House to rectify for the poor attendance last Thursday, this time with plenty of notice. We wish to see not just a debate with a note in Hansard that the house heard about the issue, but some action, some solid targets with deadlines, that reflect the IPCC science advice.

3. We wish to draw your attention to the fact that more than 148,000 people including many of us have so far signed a Change.org petition calling for central

Government to declare a climate emergency: [<https://www.change.org/p/uk-government-declare-a-national-climate-emergency-now> ] and we ask you to support this initiative. We ask you to call on Parliament to discuss this at the earliest opportunity and table solid action, rather than merely debate it and minute it in Hansard.

4. We ask for compulsory free environmental science training to be provided for all MPs.

5. We ask Parliament to review how it runs the House and how it could improve communications, time management and efficacy of Parliamentary session time by (a) giving MPs more notice of what's going on so they have a better chance of attending and (b) including action points in debates with follow ups and a route to outcomes.

6. Please would you reassure us that you have listened to the zero emissions climate debate that took place in the House of Commons on Feb 28 via Hansard.

7. Please would you confirm that you are up to date with the advice from leading scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and that you are aware of how the UK is currently falling short of what is required, and what extra measures we need to implement to reduce carbon emissions.

Climate change is not far away in the future. It is here now. People across the world are already being displaced, suffering hardship and increased poverty and dying from increased frequency and severity of floods, fires, storms, famine and other impacts. The world's poorest people are the worst affected and the least to blame.

Threatened wildlife is already being displaced. One mammal has just gone extinct directly because of global warming. Furthermore, at the likely unavoidable +1.5C average warming, scientists have said we will lose 80-90% of corals due to bleaching, and 98% of them at +2C warming. Those corals are essential for 25% of the world's marine fish species. Millions of people depend on them for food and storm defence. Four of the five worst global risks as ranked by the World Economic Forum also now relate to climate change:

[www.businessgreen.com/bg/news-analysis/3069391/climate-threat-dominates-2019-global-risk-ranking](http://www.businessgreen.com/bg/news-analysis/3069391/climate-threat-dominates-2019-global-risk-ranking)

We would appreciate a considered response to our questions as well as an explanation to all the children taking part in climate strikes - the next one is on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

We thank you for taking time to consider this letter and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

### Further useful references:

\* Climate change is hitting the poorest first and worse. Those most affected did not cause it and are powerless to stop it. The polluters aren't paying:

[www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme\\_c/popups/mod19t04s01.html](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_c/popups/mod19t04s01.html)

\* Lower-income and other disadvantaged groups pay proportionately the most towards global warming-tackling policies but benefit least:

[www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1237](http://www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1237)

\* Lots of wildlife and some entire ecosystems will be very seriously affected and in some cases wiped out:

[www.wwf.org.uk/effectsofclimatechange](http://www.wwf.org.uk/effectsofclimatechange)

\* Corals will be virtually wiped out:

[www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/coral-reefs-and-climate-change](http://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/coral-reefs-and-climate-change) and

<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/sciencebites/chapter/1-5-warming-oceans-cause-coral-reef-bleaching/>

\* Examples of impacts on UK wildlife and ecosystems:

<https://nerc.ukri.org/research/partnerships/ride/lwec/report-cards/biodiversity/>

\* Recent report warning that Scotland's iconic wildlife is at threat from climate change: [www.scotlink.org/wp/files/documents/Scotlands\\_Nature\\_Red\\_Alert.pdf](http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/documents/Scotlands_Nature_Red_Alert.pdf)

Other useful websites:

[www.carbonbrief.org/](http://www.carbonbrief.org/)

[www.ipcc.ch/](http://www.ipcc.ch/)

<https://climate.nasa.gov/>

<https://rebellion.earth/>

\* Information on climate change deniers, their widespread lack of science training and their vested interests: "An increasing portion of denial books are produced by individuals with no scientific training. At least 90% of denial books do not undergo peer review, allowing authors or editors to recycle scientifically unfounded claims that are then amplified by the conservative movement, media, and political elites":

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3787818/#!po=31.0185](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3787818/#!po=31.0185)