



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
President, COP26
Cabinet Office
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October 20, 2021

Dear Alok

I am delighted that our country is co-hosting COP 26 with Italy and that you are President. I am writing to you on behalf of my constituents in West Worcestershire to share their views with you. Over the last six months, I have met with constituents of all ages and backgrounds across West Worcestershire. Their key priorities can be divided into three themes – places, transport and protecting the wider environment.

Places

West Worcestershire is a very rural constituency with many older homes which can be difficult to keep warm in the winter. Many rely on oil or stand-alone liquid gas tanks. There is a wide acceptance that we should do more to improve the energy efficiency of our homes and swap to more environmentally friendly heating systems. Many home-owners took up the challenge of installing solar panels on their homes. However, inbound casework has many instances of people who have struggled to access the Green Homes Grant Scheme and other such initiatives which encourage homeowners to improve their home's energy efficiency. Also, planning rules can often make it difficult for constituents to install better glazing or insulation on older homes. Whilst West Worcestershire has a strong new house building programme, and the environmental standards are higher, we have a significant challenge ensuring that people's homes are ready to meet our net zero challenge.

In the workplace and in public buildings I have also questioned methods of heating and also encouraged larger electricity users to look towards using carbon-neutral providers. It will take significant investment for homes and businesses to make the proper adaptations to achieve better energy efficiency and I would hope that COP26 can identify strategies to make this ambition easier for all. The payoff in terms of reduced energy costs over time also need to be made more certain.

Transport

The nature of West Worcestershire's topography means that private car is the main form of transport. Nearly 90 per cent of our journeys are by car. We have a strong electric car community, a major car manufacturer – Morgan Motors – which is investing in electric vehicle production and a number of small and medium sized businesses working in the green transport sector. However, there is still electric car hesitancy because of the lack of rural charging points. Electric bikes are a particularly sensible option for navigating the

Malvern Hills. I am working closely with Worcestershire County Council to enhance active travel corridors to make foot and bike journeys easier and safer. I have also encouraged the use of electric and hydrogen-powered buses to make green commuting easier. However, our initial reliance on electric vehicles will put significant strain on our electricity network and the demands for more power generation on our local grid. I hope that COP 26 can come together to identify a plan to make green power generation more widely adopted, and to ensure that consumers are not penalised by higher electricity costs as we migrate to net zero energy consumption to get to and from our homes, our places of study and our workplaces.

Action on the Environment

I have visited many primary schools to hear their views on climate change. It has become a much more passionate conversation over the last decade and the children going through primary school now will be the people most affected by climate change. But as well as their own futures, most pupils have shared their concerns about the wider environment and the protection of wildlife and their ecosystems at home and abroad. They are also enthusiastic about planting more trees. They support our own national efforts to reduce our reliance on single use plastics and they would like us to do much more. Having served as Minister for Africa in Her Majesty's Government, I have seen for myself the blight of plastic bags across vast swathes of that continent, and I hope that COP 26 will be able to pledge more global action to reduce the scourge of plastic bottles, bags and other items which harm the environment and kill wildlife.

I talk regularly to farmers about their activities to protect the environment and many take their land stewardship duties very seriously. As a country I would like us to do more to protect our own food security and I lament the fact that our major supermarkets opt to fly produce all over the world to their shopping aisles rather than source them locally. I hope that COP 26 will be able to act to protect the rainforests by halting their destruction to support cattle and soya production. We have fine food production across the United Kingdom, including world famous beef and geese in my own constituency and I would hope that together we will be able to act to reduce food miles in our daily meals.

Having met with people, young and old, to discuss this globally vital challenge it could not be clearer to me that local people are well-motivated to act but need our leaders to show the way and steer us all to a path where we can be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than we found it. I wish you and your team the very best as you deliberate in Glasgow to make the world a better place for us, our children and grandchildren.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H Baldwin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Harriett Baldwin MP

Member of Parliament for West Worcestershire