

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Prime Minister
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26 June 2018

Dear Prime Minister,

We welcome your commitment to “cement the UK’s position as a world leader in the low emission and electric vehicle industry.” This commitment faces a key test in the anticipated publication of the Road to Zero Strategy, ahead of the Zero Emission Vehicle Summit in September.

Recent reports suggest that the Government may significantly water down the target of ending petrol and diesel vehicle sales by 2040 to a ‘mission’, with an interim target of 50% electric vehicle (EV) sales by 2030. This is below the 60% level recommended by the Committee on Climate Change to meet existing Carbon Budgets, let alone the higher ambition required by the Paris Agreement. Such an approach would seriously weaken the UK’s hopes of leading the race towards cleaner transport, and undermine the ambitions for the global Zero Emission Vehicle Summit later this year.

We are writing to ask you to change the 2040 ‘mission’ to end petrol/diesel car and van sales to a firm ‘commitment’ to do so by 2030, coupled with near term EV sales targets and policies to ensure this is achieved. Transport is now the UK’s biggest contributor to CO₂ emissions, mainly from petrol and diesel vehicles, and a significant contributor to poor air quality. This will require action both to decarbonise the fleet and to promote more sustainable options, such as walking, cycling and public transport. More clarity and certainty in relation to near term targets, achieved through robust policy action, could bridge over half of the current ‘policy gap’ towards the Fifth Carbon Budget and reinforce the international leadership that the UK showed in setting its coal phase-out commitment in Paris in 2015.

Recent research by Vivid Economics shows that a strong demand pull, such as a 2030 phase-out, could secure over 100,000 UK jobs in electric vehicle manufacturing by 2030. The UK auto industry is uniquely well suited to producing electric vehicles - 89% of the jobs and value in the existing industry is in segments that are directly transferable to the production of electric vehicles.

Even before the reported reduction in ambition, the Government was in the EV slow lane. Nine countries have proposed or confirmed earlier targets (including Scotland) while electric vehicle mandate systems are in place in China, Quebec and eight US States. In the UK, four select committees have urged faster action, along with 14 mayors from across the country. Businesses are also joining the call, with Richard Branson recently joining the likes of Energy UK, National Grid and E.On.

The transportation sector is about to undergo the biggest structural change it has faced since the Model T Ford appeared over 100 years ago. We can either capture this opportunity and meet our climate targets, protecting jobs and health at the same time, or sit by and watch others lead the transition. We urge you to resist calls to undermine the UK's leadership in clean vehicles, and look forward to seeing your proposals for increased ambition set out in the Road to Zero Strategy.

Yours sincerely,



Tanya Steele, Chief Executive, WWF



John Sauven, Executive Director, Greenpeace

On behalf of:

Alice Bell, Director, 10:10 Climate Action

Stephen Joseph, Chief Executive, Campaign for Better Transport

Anne Godfrey, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

Terry Fuller, Chief Executive, Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management

James Thornton, Chief Executive, ClientEarth

Clara Goldsmith, Campaigns Director, The Climate Coalition

Emma Bridge, Chief Executive, Community Energy England

Alistair Kirkbride, Executive Director, CoMoUK

Paul Tuohy, Chief Executive, Cycling UK

Baroness Bryony Worthington, Executive Director, Environmental Defense Fund Europe

Nick Mabey, Chief Executive, E3G

Craig Bennett, Chief Executive Officer, Friends of the Earth

Shaun Spiers, Executive Director, Green Alliance

Dr Ashok Sinha, Chief Executive, London Cycling Campaign

Samantha Heath, Chief Executive, London Sustainability Exchange

Johnny Gowdy, Director, Regen

Debbie Stockwell, Managing Director, Sandbag

Xavier Brice, Chief Executive, Sustrans

Cc:

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP

Richard Harrington MP

Jesse Norman MP

Rt Hon Claire Perry MP