

David Burrowes MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

23 January 2015

Dear Mr Burrowes

I am writing to you, as a concerned constituent, to share my concerns about the Infrastructure Bill and, in particular, about the clauses relating to energy:

- maximising economic recovery of UK petroleum;
- extraction of petroleum and geothermal energy in deep-level land.

I have three children and now six grandchildren. Like me, I imagine that you wish for a prosperous and sustainable future for the next generation and those to follow.

Sadly, these clauses in the Infrastructure Bill will help lead to exactly the opposite outcome if implemented. I hope, therefore, that you will oppose them.

We are perhaps the first generation that is now really well informed about the dangers that climate change and other unsustainable consequences of today's economic activities pose for future generations. A continuing drive to exploit fossil fuels that are best left in the ground is one of the greatest dangers.

Only this month, researchers at University College London published their analysis¹ of how much of available fossil fuels must be left in the ground if there is to be at least a 50 per cent chance of average global temperature rise due to global warming being restricted to 2°C, a target the UK Government is committed to through the Climate Change Act.

In their Abstract, McGlade and Ekins point out very clearly that: *Our results show that policy makers' instincts to exploit rapidly and completely their territorial fossil fuels are, in aggregate, inconsistent with their commitments to this temperature limit. Implementation of this policy commitment would also render unnecessary continued substantial expenditure on fossil fuel exploration, because any new discoveries could not lead to increased aggregate production.*

In other words, *maximising economic recovery of UK petroleum, and extraction of petroleum and geothermal energy in deep-level land*, as envisaged in the Infrastructure Bill are completely at odds with the UK's commitments under the Climate Change Act. If these parts of the Infrastructure Bill are approved, not only will our children's and our children's children's futures be compromised, but the UK will be setting a pernicious example to other states. Note, in particular, that even compliance with the figures set out by McGlade and Ekins only provides a fifty per cent chance that potentially dangerous climate change can be avoided.

I do hope, therefore, that you will consider contributing to the debate and supporting amendments which would ensure these clauses are not included, and that, if appropriate, you will support amendments for a ban or moratorium on fracking and thus in favour of a future world that can avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Luckily, there are excellent alternatives to the needless rush for more fossil fuels that these clauses in the Infrastructure Bill represent. Much cleaner alternatives can enhance future prosperity while minimising the use of fossil fuels.

¹ *The geographical distribution of fossil fuels unused when limiting global warming to 2°C*, Christophe McGlade and Paul Ekins, Nature 517, 187–190 (08 January 2015)

Another recent publication from a prestigious UK University² has made it very clear that an accelerated transition to cleaner and renewable energy, and a more energy-efficient economy, need not compromise growth, and that a low-carbon economy is likely to be stronger and more robust than a high-carbon one. Indeed, the authors point out that delaying the move to a low-carbon economy – as is inevitable if these two clauses in the Infrastructure Bill are agreed – will only incur higher overall costs in eventually moving to a low-carbon world.

These conclusions have been reinforced by another recent report by the OECD³ which directly tackles the view by some that, in the aftermath of the global economic crisis, policies designed to tackle climate change, air pollution, and other environmental challenges are luxuries that will hamper growth. The OECD is unequivocal: *The policy message is clear: more stringent environmental policies, when properly designed, can be introduced to benefit the environment without any loss in productivity.*

Hence, it is clear that there are cleaner and better alternatives to these misguided clauses in the Infrastructure Bill – better alternatives that can lead to more sustainable growth and to a better world for our children and their children.

You will almost certainly also be aware that renewable energy is increasingly popular with the citizens of this country. Voting against measures that will not only damage the environment but also lead to poorer public health will be popular as well as the right thing to do. You may have read the recent report on air quality from the European Environment Agency⁴. It is estimated that, in the UK alone, almost 40,000 excess deaths a year arise from the effects of microscopic PM_{2.5} particles in the atmosphere, these coming very largely from vehicle exhausts – the result of fossil-fuel combustion. As you are probably aware, Londoners are particularly at risk from such pollution.

Please, therefore, take this chance to persuade fellow MPs that these clauses are unnecessary and, if implemented will be very damaging. Please act instead to accelerate better and cleaner alternatives.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce Tofield

Dr Bruce Tofield

² *Path dependence, innovation and the economics of climate change*, Philippe Aghion, Cameron Hepburn, Alexander Teytelboym and Dimitri Zenghelis, Policy Paper, Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy, Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, LSE, November 2014, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/publication/path-dependence-innovation-and-the-economics-of-climate-change/>.

³ *Green Growth: Environmental Policies and Productivity Can Work Together*, OECD Policy Brief, December 2014, <http://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/PB-Green-Growth-EnvProductivity-Dec-2014.pdf>.

⁴ *Air quality in Europe - 2014 report*, EEA Report No 5/2014, November 2014, <http://www.eea.europa.eu/media/newsreleases/europes-cities-still-suffering-from>.