



Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP  
Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy  
1 Victoria St  
Westminster  
London  
SW1H 0ET

12th February 2021

**Re: The Role of Energy in the Future of Rural Transport**

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you as concerned leaders of rural local authorities, under the auspices of the Countryside Climate Network, a cross-party leadership sub-group of the UK100 network, representing over 40% of the UK's land area.

We are taking this opportunity to share first hand the energy-related challenges we face in decarbonising our transport emissions in the hope that you will incorporate a much wider and deeper vision in shaping and realising the future of rural transport. We are also writing to Robert Jenrick MP and Grant Shapps MP in parallel, because for too long the solutions to tackling climate change have been considered in siloes, and without clear determination of how governmental departments can and should work together to deliver comprehensive solutions, we will fail to tackle the climate emergency.

Following collective conversations in collaboration with industry representatives, we are keen to understand how you are working alongside your colleagues at DfT to ensure these fundamental energy-related considerations are factored adequately into the vision for the Future of Rural Transport and how we, as local leaders committed to delivering Net Zero might help.

The biggest challenge to switching to electric vehicles in rural areas is in improving the local electricity infrastructure. Local authorities will not find funds to get the network ready, we need the Government to. Careful consideration is required as grid improvements in the rural context are a challenge, in terms of disparate housing and services.

We know that smart local energy systems are essential for the successful shift to Net Zero and local authorities are crucial to the effective design and delivery of those systems, but we need the financial support and access to expertise to make them successful. We want to

help to establish a much stronger evidence base on small scale generation as it stands, and its potential to contribute to decarbonisation. And perhaps most importantly, we need regulatory change, in order to remove the current barriers brought about by the structure and function of the DNOs.

As rural local authority leaders we are keen to understand how BEIS is working with DfT and MHCLG to ensure that net zero delivery is underpinned with a whole systems approach - housing, planning and transport infrastructure needs to be co-created or it will not be fit for purpose. We need to know what vehicle-to-grid looks like at scale, for example.

Our world and our rural communities are changing; the government needs to understand these changes so that interventions can be made in this dynamic context. Rural regeneration must be at the heart of any government effort to support local authorities to improve future transport. All solutions need to factor in economic, social and environmental considerations - and contribute towards achieving rapid decarbonisation.

UK100's Resilient Recovery Declaration highlighted the need to speed up the transition to low and zero emission travel and enable the UK to be a global leader in developing zero emission vehicles including buses and freight. It underlined that this should include a commitment to providing seamless access to electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the UK. Further support should be provided to citizens and businesses to switch from polluting vehicles to greener ones while also providing long-term investment in public transport networks and in creating built environments that prioritise walking and cycling.

We are keen to engage with you and your officials, especially in a cross-departmental way, to help shape the development of solutions that will bring benefits to rural areas. Collaboration with us will help build public consent and support in communities currently heavily dependent on fossil fuel based transport.

We look forward to your reply and establishing an ongoing relationship that can help the country achieve Net Zero in line with legislation and the science.

Yours sincerely



Cllr. Steve Count, Leader,  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Chair. Countryside Climate Network  
Co-Chair, UK100



Polly Billington, Director, UK100  
Vice-Chair, Countryside Climate Network

On behalf of the following CCN members:

- Adur District Council

- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Canterbury City Council
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Cornwall Council
- Cotswold District Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Durham County Council
- Essex County Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Herefordshire Council
- Lancaster City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- North Somerset District Council
- North Yorkshire County Council
- Shropshire Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- South Lakeland District Council
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Wiltshire Council
- Worthing Borough Council
- Wychavon District Council

Cc:

Rt Hon. Grant Shapps MP

Rt. Hon. Robert Jenrick MP