

## RDAs

The UK has established its reputation on the world stage as a leading voice on climate change. This Government must continue to show strong international leadership by what the UK says on the global stage and by what it does in its policy, in our communities and in the way we build economic recovery. The UK was the first country to have climate change legislation committing the country to climate change targets. The Committee on Climate Change plays a critical role in setting budgets and providing advice to the Government on how to achieve them. In the run up to the election the Green Alliance's Report 'The Last Parliament' made a powerful argument that now is the time for action. The report reminds us that over the next five years Parliament has the last opportunity to take action on the national and international stage and prevent run-away climate change. Failure to stabilise emissions in that time frame will dramatically reduce our chances of keeping global warming below the predicted 2 degree global temperature rise. This Government has declared it wants to be the 'greenest' Government. This is not simply a desirable ambition, but is an essential requirement.

I have been interested to see how the Government's plans will impact on the NW specifically. The region is the most renewable energy rich region in the UK, offering opportunities for the region's continued economic development especially with the creation of green jobs and economic growth as well as contributing to the national economic recovery.

It is with great concern therefore, that I hear about the intention to create Local Enterprise Partnership to replace the RDAs. The NWDA has strong partnerships with local authorities, business and other stake holders in setting long term strategy for the region's economic growth. The NWDA has a long track record in the region; it is an investor for and not a cost to central Government, its investments in projects result in a net increase in wealth of £5.20 per every £1 invested. It is widely supported in the region and has a deep knowledge of the region making evidence based decisions about business support provision and delivery on the ground. Even though the Secretary of State for business, Innovation & Skills, Vince Cable has implied that in the North West the LEP may take the form of the RDA, it would appear this will be a much slimmed down version with a lighter remit for economic development.

Removing or reducing regional level support for the North West at this time would be detrimental to Liverpool's future and the future economic growth of the region. Without the NWDA the region would be competing for support alongside more 'successful' places in the UK and Europe. In 2009/10 the NWDA played a pivotal role in attracting more foreign investment than any other region outside the South East, creating or safeguarding more than 14,000 jobs. The NWDA played a key role in the success of Liverpool Capital of Culture, the transformation of the waterfront in Liverpool and the creation of the Liverpool Commercial District. The regional prioritisation of Liverpool and the scale of investment has transformed the city, transformed private sector confidence and led to significant private sector investment, notably Liverpool One.

The NWDA is key to developing renewable energy opportunities and green jobs for the region as a key part of development of the UK's renewable energy sector.

It therefore seems ill-advised for the Government to change the remit of the NWDA, at best reducing its reach with regard to economic growth, at worst disbanding it and replacing it with another organisation. The NWDA has played a central and critical role in economic growth in the North West. The Government's National Planning Statement must demonstrate

commitment to develop the UK energy mix, including developing a strong renewable energy sector. The North West is rich in renewable energy. Therefore, the proposal to replace or reduce the role of the NWDA in the region is of great concern, especially at a time when the North West has the opportunity to develop renewable energy and build economic recovery.

The UK faces challenging targets for carbon emissions; we cannot achieve these without the integration of infrastructure planning, economic growth and energy generation. The proposed abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies seems to remove the mechanism to align infrastructure priorities with economic potential. At the beginnings of fragile economic recovery in the North West, there is some concern about disconnecting infrastructure planning from economic development. We have a national requirement to develop a sustainable, reliable renewable energy supply. The North West is rich in renewable energy and is well placed to benefit from the economic potential of developing renewables. Removal of the alignment of infrastructure priorities with economic potential opens up the possibility that the North West will miss out on this potential economic growth.

The development of national infrastructure must contribute to and enable the development of a green economic recovery. We will all remember the informed debates during the last Parliament about the Planning Bill, which defined a new infrastructure planning process in the UK. I confess to some measure of hesitation to embark on further planning legislation, but there is an opportunity to improve the Planning Act. It is important that the Government replaces the Infrastructure Planning Commission with a system that is not just "efficient and accountable" but also a system that counts the carbon of new infrastructure planning requests.

We must avoid falling into the trap of believing nuclear is our primary and easiest energy solution; indeed, I share the concerns expressed about nuclear energy by the Minister Chris Huhne. I question the development of nuclear energy on the grounds of proportionality; the energy consumption of one generation burdens a hundred generations with the problem of dealing with the waste. I urge the Government to strive for a rich energy mix, including the abundant and as yet almost entirely untapped renewable energy sources around our country. For example, up to 20% of the electricity required by the UK can be provided from the waters and tides of our coasts, predominantly on the west coast of the UK. The North West is the most renewable energy rich region in the UK and is well placed, with the support of the existing NWDA to develop jobs and green economic growth in the region and to make a significant contribution to UK's energy requirements. At this time of economic opportunity for the North West it does not make any sense to replace the NWDA or to reduce their remit.

The UK cannot do this alone. The UK needs to redouble its efforts internationally to achieve a global deal on climate change and to ensure Europe, America, China and India act now and act significantly to reduce global emissions. The climate talks in Mexico at the end of this year are an essential step on the way to a global deal. The UK needs to continue to press for a global climate finance deal finding money as investment for climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing countries. It is important that this is extra to the money that has already been pledged for aid. The poor are the hardest hit by climate change; the developed nations have a responsibility to make investment available for the hardest hit nations to enable people to adapt to the changing climate that is changing their harvest, changing the landscape and changing the way they live, and to militate against future changes in the climate. I am pleased to see the Government's commitment to continue to try to persuade the EU to move unilaterally to 30% reduction in its emissions and not to wait for a global agreement before they act. The EU provides a strong voice on the international stage; it can show leadership by acting now.

At home the Government has an important role to provide the initiative for changes in lifestyle. Government policy is not enough to achieve the required reductions in emissions. We need to inform and enable people to make changes to the way they live. I support the Government's intention to roll out smart metres and to establish a full system of feed-in tariffs. I support the Government's intention to encourage home energy efficiency improvements paid for by savings on energy bills. I urge the Government to go further and to embark on a programme to retro fit existing housing with insulation and other energy saving measures. I support the Plugged in Places programme and have added my voice of support to the Liverpool bid to be one of the Pilot Cities investing in an electric vehicle infrastructure across the city.

Government Departments need to work together if we are to prevent run-away climate change. The Coalition Government is setting an example by recognising differences and yet finding common ground as a place of strength from which to work. It is vital that Government Departments follow this example and work across departments, not in silos. I hope we will see the "new politics" not just at Cabinet and Ministerial level but at every level across Government Departments. This is a vital element in achieving the changes required for this Parliament to take every opportunity available as the 'Last Parliament' able to prevent run-away climate change.

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