

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
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Dear Secretaries of State,

While the UK government has made a commitment to address climate change, it is how much fossil fuels are allowed to be burnt - with coal being by far the fuel with the most impact - that will determine future levels of climate change.

We are writing to urge you to bring in a strong presumption against any future opencast coal extraction in England to meet future climate commitments and continue to drive innovation in low carbon alternatives.

We welcomed the government's refusal of planning permission for the proposed Highthorn opencast coal mine at Druridge Bay in Northumberland. The then Communities Secretary Sajid Javid wrote "*the scheme would have an adverse effect on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change of very substantial significance*". This was the right decision for the right reason. We also welcome your defence of this decision in the face of the legal challenge by Banks Mining.

We believe that the government should now go further and bring in a strong presumption against all future opencast coal mines in England. The revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides an opportunity to do this.

The use of coal is falling: the UK has had several days this year without using coal for power generation. Future demand for coal is also falling, and the results of the recent capacity auction signal that, by October 2021, there will only be two coal-fired power stations with capacity contracts: Drax and Ratcliffe. Opencast coal mining is a small industry with no planning applications in the pipeline and which employs relatively few people.

We urge you to finish the job. This could be done by strengthening the text on opencast mines in the NPPF to say that opencast and deep mines should not be permitted and that, if they are, they should have to demonstrate why they are needed in the context of climate change emissions reductions targets and of national energy security.

Such a move would support the government's domestic commitment to phase out the unabated use of coal for power generation. It would also be a strong statement internationally for the country that led the world into the fossil fuel age with the use of coal to also be leading the way out of coal and towards greener solutions, as the government has committed to do through the Powering Past Coal Alliance.

We urge you to take this step and strengthen the government's claim to be a world-leader in tackling climate change and moving beyond coal.

Yours sincerely,

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