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Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change
Department of Energy and Climate Change
3 Whitehall Place
London
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26th November 2015

Dear Secretary of State

Re: Compatibility or otherwise of gas expansion with UK's climate targets

Friends of the Earth welcomes your commitment to phase-out coal by 2025.

We are extremely concerned, however, that this phase-out is conditional on some unspecified level of gas-power station construction. I am writing to you to ask if you will publicly clarify in advance of Paris what level of gas construction you mean, and how much that capacity would be used.

This question is critical because one of the three scenarios posited by the Government in its 2012 Gas Generation Strategy has high levels of gas-use in power in 2030 – equivalent to 200g/kWh emissions for the electricity sector. Your Committee on Climate Change has previously said such a scenario would be “completely incompatible” with the UK's climate targets, and this year leading academics have called such a scenario “tantamount to an abandonment of the UK's contribution to limiting global warming to 2 degrees”.

We would seek urgent clarification that the gas expansion you are making the coal phase-out conditional upon is one that is compatible with the CCC's 50-100g/kWh range, rather than the 200g/kWh scenario.

Finally, we are concerned that you have made the coal phase-out conditional on any sort of gas expansion: this appears to be a too technology specific and restrictive approach. There are many ways to ensure the coal phase-out does not affect energy security – for example we note that the Green Alliance's work which shows that 2/3rds of the coal phase out can be covered by policy to promote demand side response and energy demand reduction. Energy security is of course critical, but the UK should have a far more balanced portfolio of options than an over-reliance on gas, most of which will be imported.

Yours sincerely

Craig Bennett,
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