



House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

Ref: ZA20369

The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP  
Minister of State  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET

2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022

Dear Greg,

**Re: Chester Community Energy.**

I am writing on behalf of Chester Community Energy (CCE), a group active in my constituency.

CCE do fantastic work locally, and I have recently heard from them outlining a number of concerns. I have included these as follows:

*"Kwasi Kwarteng promised to set out the government's future plans for community energy in the Net Zero Strategy in lieu of a specific strategy on Community Energy which the Environmental Audit Committee had recommended in April. Whilst community energy is mentioned, the Net Zero Strategy does not emphasise the importance of community energy in achieving net zero or propose "practical support measures to harness the potential of community energy" as recommended by the Environmental Audit Committee.*

*I ask you to write to the Energy Minister regarding these omissions and urging him to include these support measures within the departmental budget. Community energy is essential to involving people and communities in developing and adopting climate solutions in the net zero transition and to maximise social benefit from it. The Climate Change Committee warns "if the people of the UK are not engaged in this challenge - the UK will not deliver Net Zero by 2050... people need to be brought into the decision-making process and derive a sense of ownership of the Net Zero project." This is at least as important as technological transformation to which the Net Zero Strategy commits billions of pounds.*

*The lack of support for people, communities or social businesses to take local climate action means that 'world-leading' net zero policy is likely to fail to deliver and those billions will have been wasted. Community energy must be supported by the government to catalyse awareness, behaviour change and the invention of and participation in local energy solutions at scale. The Net Zero Strategy promises, "we will empower local leaders to kickstart their own net zero initiatives." This must include practical support and funding, not just for local authority leaders but the local leaders of the 424 (and growing) community energy groups across the UK who have kickstarted so many net zero initiatives, and delivered huge community benefits from them over the last 10 years.*

*For the last five years, almost every policy change has prevented community energy from playing its potentially transformative role. The sector is set to grow exponentially again if it is appropriately valued and supported by the government."*

I would be grateful if you could let me know your response to the points raised by Chester Community Energy, and what actions can be taken to improve engagement with, and support for, such vital local groups.

I thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

**Yours sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C Matheson'.

**Christian Matheson MP**