

28 November 2023

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing to you ahead of the COP28 summit to ask you to prioritise addressing the currently unfolding climate and nature emergency, and press for clear, progressive outcomes at the conference that benefit both people and nature. Failure to do this will lead to disastrous environmental, economic and humanitarian consequences. The interconnectedness of these global issues must also be considered; the factors accelerating issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, and chemical and waste pollution are intertwined, and global solutions must approach these challenges holistically.

**Economic and humanitarian disaster**

If left unchecked, the impacts of climate change could cost the world economy up to US\$178 trillion in net present value terms from 2021 – 2070<sup>1</sup>. There are also potential humanitarian disasters, with approximately 3.3 to 3.6 billion people living in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change<sup>2</sup>. This level of mass migration will lead to increased population pressures across the globe<sup>3</sup>.

**Pandemic risks and food insecurity**

Climate change and associated environmental degradation also increases the risk of both the emergence and spread of zoonotic pathogens, as well as increased risk of antimicrobial resistance, which could lead to future global pandemics. The spread of plant and fungal pathogens could also threaten ecosystem collapse, and accelerate issues of food and resource insecurity<sup>4</sup>, affecting every corner of global society.

**Leading by example**

The UK has been a global leader on these issues in the past, and the COP28 summit in Dubai represents a real opportunity for the UK to get back to this position of driving positive environmental action. However, recent domestic policies such as the approval of new oil and gas licenses, and new exemptions to the phase out of fossil fuel boilers, risk discrediting the UK's position as a leader in this field, as well as posing a threat to its own Net Zero targets<sup>5</sup>, which, according to the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC), the UK is already not on track to meet<sup>6</sup>. This is in line with public opinion, with 81% of the population feeling at least fairly concerned by the prospect of climate change<sup>7</sup>, and less than a third of the population feeling the UK has a clear plan to tackle this<sup>8</sup>.

We welcome your commitment to attend COP28, and hope that it will be a real opportunity for global progression and cooperation towards addressing the climate crisis. Inaction and delay will only exacerbate the aforementioned environmental issues further. Put simply, there is no time to waste.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Mark Downs CSci FRSB

Chief Executive

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<sup>1</sup> Deloitte, 2022: [The turning point: A Global Summary](#)

<sup>2</sup> IPCC, 2023: [AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023: Summary for Policymakers](#)

<sup>3</sup> IEP, 2020: [Over one billion people at threat of being displaced by 2050 due to environmental change, conflict and civil unrest](#)

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organisation, 2022: [A health perspective on the role of the environment in One Health](#)

<sup>5</sup> Climate Change Committee, 2022: [CCC assessment of recent announcements and developments on Net Zero](#)

<sup>6</sup> Climate Change Committee, 2023: [Progress towards reaching Net Zero in the UK](#)

<sup>7</sup> Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2023: [DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker: Summer 2023](#)

<sup>8</sup> Ipsos Global Advisor, 2023: [Earth Day 2023: Public opinion on climate change](#)