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Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 22 March, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about zero carbon emission target.

The Paris Agreement, reached at the UN climate summit at the end of 2015, marks a significant step forward towards reducing, on a global scale, the emissions that cause climate change. Among other successful outcomes, the Agreement sets a clear long term goal of net zero emissions in the second half of the century showing that the world is committed to decarbonisation.

The Government believes we will need to take the step of enshrining the global goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions into UK law. The question is not whether but how we do it. However, this question can only be answered effectively once we have considered a range of factors.

As a first step, our independent advisors, the Committee on Climate Change, is looking at the implications of the commitments in Paris, including the zero carbon emissions goal. It has said that it will report in the autumn. We will consider carefully the recommendations of the Committee. Following this we have given an undertaking that we will discuss with Members of Parliament how best to approach the issue.

This Government's current actions against climate change are guided by our commitment to the Climate Change Act and its target of an at least 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Our priority this year is setting the fifth carbon budget (covering the period 2028-32) by the end of June and developing our plan on how we will meet our existing targets. We are clear that this must be done while keeping our energy supply safe and costs as low as possible for hardworking families and businesses.

Yours sincerely

AMBER RUDD