

Rt.Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC PM
10 Downing St,
London
SW1A 2AA

July 2024

Dear Prime Minister,

Congratulations on your landslide general election success and huge mandate for change.

The UK Green Building Council is a charity working to transform the built environment in the face of the climate, nature and cost-of-living crises.

We share your ambitions in a number of areas - from fixing the broken planning system, through addressing the affordable homes crisis, to upgrading homes to tackle energy bills. These are some of the biggest opportunities you have to demonstrate change and we offer our expertise and experience to help you deliver at scale and pace.

We are supported by over 700 members and partners, including some of the biggest names across the built environment from banks, pension funds, housing associations, corporate owner-occupiers, housebuilders, and manufacturers to architects, designers, innovative startups, universities, local councils and indeed some of your largest government departments.

We're pleased that you want an active partnership with industry. We worked closely with the previous Labour Government; convening the sector to agree on major policy initiatives - including the original zero carbon buildings targets - stress-testing policy ideas to help avoid pitfalls, and mobilising industry support for progressive environmental policies. We also played a central role in the last Government's aborted Energy Efficiency Taskforce which brought industry and government together to find innovative solutions and drive investment and action.

We stand ready to convene experts and advise your team on the ambitious policies, regulations, specifications, and implementation needed to rebuild Britain, in 4 key areas:

Planning reform and new buildings

Your agenda of national renewal, ensuring that new homes are genuinely affordable, high-quality, well-located, and low carbon, is urgently needed. Getting planning reform and buildings standards right will be critical to reducing conflict and delays - often because of environmental concerns.

We were delighted that the Labour Party repeatedly voted to align planning with the Climate Change Act last year. We championed cross party support for this and for alignment with the Environment Act and hope you can bring this into law soon. We are also championing practical high environmental standards for new buildings in line with the higher standards set by many local authorities and with the UK's climate commitments. We hope your government will confirm new higher standards quickly and set new limits on the carbon emissions embodied in construction.

Warm Homes plan

Successful delivery of your Warm Homes plan will be critical to not only to cutting energy bills and boosting public health, but our analysis shows it can cut billions off the cost of your ambition to clean the power grid by 2030.

Our national retrofit calculator developed with industry and academic experts can help you identify where to target government investment and policies to drive the biggest benefits to energy bills, public health, jobs and carbon emissions. It shows the huge benefits of a longer-term strategy and larger scale investment in Warm Homes of around £64 billion over 10 years and we would urge you to commit to increase investment in the future, as you have done with defence spending. Our network of over 100 local authority retrofit officers can help you accelerate local delivery.

Protecting communities from climate risks

Your commitment to improve preparation for climate hazards, across all levels of governance, is vital, as your government inherits a legacy of insubstantial plans on this. We are creating a comprehensive roadmap to make the UK's built environment climate resilient, including practical industry-backed policy recommendations.

Renewing our town centres

Many of our town centres are struggling. Your attention to the empty, run-down and energy inefficient properties on our high streets is a chance to breathe new life and investment into left-behind communities. We have industry-developed policy proposals to transform our commercial and public buildings, reduce unnecessary demolition of iconic buildings with character and ensure repurposed buildings are fit for purpose. And share lessons from our regenerative places programme working closely with local authorities to develop broad-scale plans that use buildings and more green spaces to deliver improved health, well-being, and climate resilience.

Our green agenda and sector has suffered from years of stop-start government policy and a lack of ambitious visible leadership from the top. We would be delighted to see you lead a joined-up Office for Climate and Nature to provide oversight and delivery on these policies.

We and our members are ready to form a new partnership with your Government to help you act decisively on your huge mandate for change to protect people, nature and our climate.

Simon McWhirter



Deputy CEO and Director of Policy
UK Green Building Council