



September 18<sup>th</sup> 2020

Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng, Minister of State at the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
Rt Hon Lesley Griffiths, Welsh Minister for Energy, Environment and Rural Affairs  
Rt Hon Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

**By email:** [kwasi.kwarteng.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:kwasi.kwarteng.mp@parliament.uk); [robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk);  
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**RE: The implications of new UK coal mines for greenhouse gas emissions**

Dear Ministers,

We the undersigned, including economists and natural resource experts, are writing to make clear the connection between opening new coal mines in the UK and an increase in UK and global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This is to correct assertions by those proposing such developments that new UK coal mines will have no effect on, or even decrease, global GHG emissions.

Over the past 18 months, coal mining companies, local authorities and even some government ministers have claimed that coal from these new UK mines would substitute for coal which would otherwise be imported from abroad, so that opening these new coal mines in the UK would be 'carbon neutral' or even offer 'carbon savings'. See Appendix 1 for examples of this claim. We call this claim the 'substitution error'.

We write here to correct this error, and to explain on the basis of the well-accepted economics of natural resources that:

1. The expansion of the global coal supply will, in the absence of market features for which there is no evidence in respect of demand for coal, lead to downward pressure on the price of coal and an increase in demand for it.
2. This downward price pressure will worsen the competitive position of those developing coal-free technologies in such currently carbon-intensive industries as steel and cement
3. The result of these economic forces is highly likely to be an increase in GHG emissions in both the short and long term.

For expansion on these arguments, see Appendix 2,3 and 4: Letters by Professor Paul Ekins to three UK planning authorities involved in the potential permitting of new UK coal mines.

We are extremely concerned that acceptance of the 'substitution error' is in danger of influencing important decisions on coal at a local and national level that will lead to an increase in GHGs, put the UK's net-zero targets at risk (some of these proposed new mines are projected to be producing beyond 2050) and damage the UK's standing as a world leader in phasing out coal. This would be particularly unfortunate as the UK prepares for COP26 in 2021, a major objective of which must be to persuade other countries to turn away from this most polluting and GHG-intensive of fossil fuels.

We hope that we can count on you to reinforce the UK's position as a world leader in decarbonisation by making clear that new coal mines have no place in the UK, and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Paul Ekins OBE, Director of UCL Institute for Sustainable Resources, University College London

(signed by email in a personal capacity; titles and affiliation for identification purposes only)

Professor Raimund Bleischwitz, Professor of Sustainable Global Resources, University College London

Professor Sam Fankhauser, Director, Grantham Research Institute, London School of Economics

Professor Tim Jackson, Professor of Sustainable Development, University of Surrey

Professor Karsten Neuhoff, Professor at Faculty of Economics and Management, Technische Universität Berlin

Professor Rick van der Ploeg, Professor of Economics, University of Oxford

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Professor Peter Cox, Professor of Climate System Dynamics, University of Exeter

Dr Elizabeth Cripps, Senior Lecturer in Political Theory (Climate Justice), University of Edinburgh

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Professor Sir Andy Haines, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

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Dr Daniel C. Jones, Physical Oceanographer, British Antarctic Survey

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Professor Rachel Warren, Professor of Global Change and Environmental Biology, University of East Anglia

Dr Duncan Watson-Parris, Atmospheric Physicist, University of Oxford

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1:**

**Examples of statements involving the ‘substitution error’ by coal mining companies, planning authorities and ministers**

**Appendix 2: Re. Decision to Grant planning permission for a new underground coal mine (Prof Paul Ekins to Cumbria County Council)**

**Appendix 3: Re. The economics of coal and steel, as relating to the proposal for an extension to the ‘Bradley’ opencast coal mine (Prof Paul Ekins to Durham County Council)**

**Appendix 4: The economics of coal and steel, as relating to the proposal for 'Dewley Hill' surface mine (Prof Paul Ekins to Newcastle City Council)**