

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FORUM

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NR/LP/Gove150413

15 April 2013

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Dear Secretary of State,

Climate Change and proposed changes to the School Curriculum for under-14 year olds in England

The Environmental Policy Forum (EPF) is a network of UK environmental professional bodies promoting environmental sustainability and resilience for the public benefit. The EPF's member bodies are committed to training, learning, development and innovation and have a collective membership of around 40,000 environmental professionals – many of whom are individually chartered.

Climate change is the biggest challenge we face as a nation. Future generations will need the knowledge and the skills to build innovative, resilience-based solutions to survive future shocks, extreme weather events and resource depletion. Children will also need these skills to meet the goal of building a world-leading carbon-neutral economy - and an economy which exploits the economic growth and development opportunities (especially export into the world markets) which are available through commercialising the excellent UK Research and Development base in climate change technologies. This should also improve the outlook for high GVA jobs in science, technology and engineering, and will offer improved economic performance and improved balance of payments for UK plc. We implore you to consult with your colleagues in BIS over these matters.

How can future generations of scientists and business leaders begin to tackle these challenges if climate change is removed from the school curriculum for under 14-year olds, as your Department is proposing to do? Climate change teaching in schools cannot be left to the discretion of individual teachers and it cannot be withdrawn completely.

One of the ways in which the public will know if this government is committed to acting on climate change is whether Ministers are prepared to live up to the 'greenest government ever' claim and are prepared to put the environment at the heart of our children's education. If you put a brake on climate change learning it

will be evident that the commitment is lacking and future generations will be put even more at risk.

We, the representatives of the professional bodies named below, are deeply concerned by the proposed curriculum change and we are alarmed that all references to sustainable development are also likely to be removed. The loss of opportunities to learn about climate change and sustainable development during this important stage of a child's education looks like political short-sightedness and a lack of commitment to tackle the serious environmental issues we face. It will fall upon the upcoming generation of young people to be as well-equipped as they can be to adapt to a changing climate, to be resilient and to secure their future and that of their children. We urge you to re-think your plans and put environmental learning at the heart of children's education. We also urge you to heed the recent warning of the Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Sir John Beddington, that the problems caused by climate change will only increase and that we must all be better prepared to deal with them.

We would be very pleased to meet with you and your ministerial colleagues to discuss this issue. We share the government's goal of wanting to enhance children's learning opportunities. But we believe that this must include giving young people a good understanding of the science of climate change and the tools that will make them as resilient and adaptable as possible to a warming world.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Reeves OBE, CEnv
Executive Director
Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management

For and on behalf of:

Professor William Pope CEnv
Vice President
Institution of Environmental Sciences

Sally Hayns CEnv
Chief Executive
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