

Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

Telephone 08459 335577  
Email [helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk)  
Website [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)



Dr James Hansen  
USA

Our ref: PO63309/TB  
30 June 2008

From the Minister for the Environment  
Phil Woolas MP

*Dear James*

Thank you for your letter of 19 December to Gordon Brown regarding Climate Change. I am replying as the Minister for the Environment.

May I apologise for the very long delay in replying to you. A full return address was not provided in your letter and officials did not feel it appropriate to respond to your addresses at the NASA Goddard Institute of Space Studies or Columbia University since you wrote as a private citizen.

Firstly, I would like to make clear that both Defra and the Government recognise the great importance of tackling climate change and that the UK must take an active lead in doing so. We feel that no other industrialised country has done more to tackle this global problem but we are by no means complacent that a great deal of further action is required.

Your letter focuses on the future of UK electricity generation and the role of coal-fired power stations. For the UK, the starting point in considering how best to tackle emissions from the power sector is to recognise the central role of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), particularly given the EU's ambition that 'cap and trade' should form an integral part of a global climate change deal.

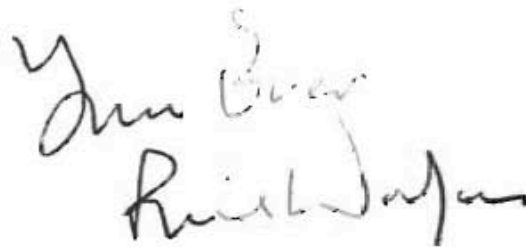
The EU ETS lies at the heart of our strategy for reducing emissions from the power sector at least cost, minimising the impact on consumer bills. A key priority for us is therefore to

see this scheme strengthened and we are in the process of negotiating the details of the revised EU ETS Directive with the EU Commission. The proposal to tighten the cap year on year from 2013 to 2020 and beyond, setting us on a clear pathway to achieve our long term emissions goals and giving a clear signal to industry on the future of the carbon market, is welcome. It is for the market to determine how to operate within this clear framework, including whether to invest in new coal power stations, with the carbon price a key factor influencing their decision making.

There are serious arguments against mandating the use of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS). The significant technical and cost uncertainties around CCS, which is as yet unproved on a fully commercial scale, could mean a likely voluntary moratorium on new coal build, bringing risks to our energy security. Moreover, UK deployment of CCS without regard to the EU ETS carbon price signal could simply lead to higher emissions from other EU ETS participants, with no net change in EU emissions. The EU's emissions reduction effort would remain at the level of the EU ETS cap.

Our role in assisting the market both to operate within the EU ETS cap and provide us with secure electricity supplies is to ensure that there is a suitable range of generation technologies available for operators to choose from. The UK has committed itself to completing a commercial scale CCS demonstration project by 2014, by means of the competition announced by the Prime Minister in November 2007. By taking a leading role in developing and demonstrating CCS technologies, alongside measures to facilitate the deployment of nuclear and promote the deployment of renewables, we are ensuring that there are a range of low carbon options available. But we also expect there to be a need for new coal and gas plant, given the significant growth projected in renewable generation and the closure of older coal, oil and nuclear plant.

The Government recognises that new fossil plant built today risk locking in emissions for 40 years at a time when we are seeking to reduce emissions by at least 60% compared to 1990 levels. Therefore the Government is consulting on measures that could apply to all new combustion plant (coal, gas, oil and large CHP), requiring them to be designed and built carbon capture ready. In future, we hope that CCS will have the potential to allow economic retrofit of the technology when commercially available, by 2020 if possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Woolas', written in a cursive style.

**PHIL WOOLAS**