

Rt Hon Claire Coutinho MP
Secretary of State
Energy Security and Net Zero
55 Whitehall
London SW1A 2HP

Tuesday 5th December 2023

By email: Secretary.State@energysecurity.gov.uk

**London Borough
of Newham**
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Dear Secretary of State,

RE: Funding for retrofitting as part of Just Transition plan

This morning, my Cabinet and I approved a local government first: we approved our Climate Action Just Transition plan with three core principles of increasing equity, reducing emissions, and ensuring future-readiness for climate change as part of our ongoing commitments in response to the climate emergency we and the planet all face.

As you are aware, COP28 taking place in the United Arab Emirates is marshalling the focus of the international community with the Global Stocktake to assess climate efforts and progress so far on the Paris Agreement signed by 156 countries in 2015. It is also focusing on gaps in climate actions with a special emphasis on fast-tracking the energy transition by 2030; transforming climate finance and putting nature, people, live and livelihoods at the heart of climate action.

Our Climate Action Just Transition strategy places the resilience of our people and communities in Newham at its heart; and I am asking that you and the government allocates much needed funding for Newham and London to deliver social housing retrofits for electrification, improved energy efficiency and overall healthier homes as part of our Just Transition Plan. It will also create a plethora of employment and skill opportunities for our residents as part of our inclusive growth and green economy agenda, which we want to accelerate and unleash.

As the Mayor of Newham, achieving net zero by 2045 in my borough is fundamental because the threat of climate change is greater in Newham than almost anywhere else in the UK. We are a proudly diverse borough and recognise that climate change impacts are felt disproportionately across our communities. Low income and disadvantaged groups contribute the least to climate change, yet disproportionately pay the highest costs for climate adaptation, and are most vulnerable to the impacts of inaction.

That is why decarbonising home energy consumption and increasing energy efficiency is a core part of our Just Transition and existing retrofit plans across our housing stock;

allowing residents cope better through enhanced resilience to extreme cold and heat seasons, while reducing expenditure on bills and address health concerns, especially around damp and mould.

By way of context, Newham has over 17,000 tenant households and 7,000 social leaseholders which means that our housing estates and stock will play a crucial role in achieving net zero and supporting a just transition. We also have 68 percent of our residents living in the private rented sector characterised by those much loved heritage 'lovely but leaky' Victorian and Edwardian period homes.

As a start, we are committed in ensuring that our council housing meets a high standard of health and safety, so we are prioritising and implementing retrofits of gas heating and cooking fixtures, lighting, and unit insulation of social housing and temporary accommodation assets. Most recently, we were allocated £1.7million from the social housing decarbonisation fund for energy efficient measures to renovate our Hamara Ghar sheltered housing provision; which signals the acceleration of our social housing retrofit plans in Newham.

But we need more funds as it is a drop in the ocean in the face of the scale of retrofit required across our Newham 17,000 social housing stock. We need funds of circa £800 million because at current prices the retrofit costs for one flat costs us £50,000. You will be aware that in response to service pressures with temporary accommodation as well as children and adult social care, Council's budgets are under the most extremes of demand – compounded by inflationary pressures caused by economic uncertainties.

We simply cannot cover the costs of retrofit without more social housing decarbonisation fund money – and I am asking you for more. You know that local government has a vital role to play to meet net carbon zero and I know that our Just Transition plan can inspire action from you and government. But we need more funding from you.

I would welcome a discussion with you and your officials about how we can enable the strategic co-ordination between local and central government to achieving a just transition in Newham and beyond, and will ask my office to be in touch to coordinate a meeting in the New Year.

Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rokhsana Fiaz', with a horizontal line underneath.

Rokhsana Fiaz OBE
Mayor of Newham