

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
President of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26)
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

8th October 2021

Dear Alok,

**Building back better: Strengthening digital and physical infrastructure
Report on Windsor Debates – 23rd & 24th September 2021**

As we have promised in earlier correspondence, I am writing on behalf of the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC) to provide you an update of the key findings from our flagship [Windsor Debates](#). In 2021 we held two events focused on the sustainability and climate change topic. In March on [“Promoting intelligent climate planning and decarbonisation at speed”](#) and in September the above theme.

Our speakers included [Yvo de Boer](#), former Executive Secretary, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; [Elodie Viau](#), Head of The European Centre for Space Applications and Telecommunications (ECSAT) at the European Space Agency (ESA); [Harry Gaskell](#), Purpose and Sustainability Leader at EY, [Professor David Simon](#), Royal Holloway, University of London and [Shevaun Haviland](#), Director General, British Chambers of Commerce (BCC).

From the greater Reading area, business leads from Microsoft, Heathrow Airport, PwC, Kawasaki, Bayer, Blake Morgan LLP and Barton Willmore Planning – an illustrious line-up representing some of the best, innovative and thought leading businesses in the Thames Valley, if not the UK as a whole.

Naturally, we were disappointed your busy pre- COP-26 schedule didn't allow you to join us and hear from many companies located in your constituency as well as the wider region. Notwithstanding, as I promised, we take this opportunity to share with you a high-level summary of the key outcomes which we hope might inform your own preparations for the COP-26 conference. In this we wish you, your team and Her Majesty's Government all the very best. Our business community are excited about the conference and the outcomes.

From Windsor Debates you will be encouraged to learn that an overarching message to you, and to COP26, is that the business community is very supportive, upbeat and positive to the immense challenges. We accept that long term problems need to be addressed and necessary financial commitments and investments made. But, our business community concluded, we also need to have and create the stimulus to help address shorter-term issues and create the opportunities that businesses thrive and are passionate about.

Our concluding challenge and ambition is summarised in what was referred to as the four “Cs” – Collaboration, Coherence, Challenge and Coalition. Our businesses also expressed their urge of Government, and those at COP26, to adopt a similar approach to the future of this country, and of the planet.

Collaboration

- A new, more effective public private partnership (PPP 2.0)
- Large businesses benefit from the agility and innovation of SMEs to mutual commercial benefit and the delivery of ESG goals (Economic Societal Governance)
- Chambers lobbying Government on behalf of businesses to move this forward

Coherence

- Clarity of message
- Business needs a clearer understanding from Government of its intentions / commitments and subsidy policies
- Employers need to send a coherent message to employees, customers, and supply chain in relation to ESG – the pendulum of power is shifting towards employees and customers

Challenge

- Promote best practice, and where we need to speed up (e.g., buildings and industry)
- Showcase what big tech is doing and committing to, and offering their customers
- Identify and draw out novel solutions from IP-rich and innovative SMEs

Coalition

- One way to deliver solutions to these challenges is through coalition with clarity of purpose, method, and measurement
- Coalition is all about Collaboration, Coherence and Challenge (sustainability is a collective community responsibility)
- Call to arms for our business community to engage – including but not limited to the Sustainability Working Group

To close Windsor Debates, we announced the launch of the Thames Valley’s new business-led **Sustainability Working Group**. The first meeting of this Group is scheduled for 16th November 2021 and you will have an invitation to join. Its membership draws on those businesses and key sectors that represent the region – leading practitioners and thought leaders who will lead by example and help:

- Highlight the impact of failing to engage and what the key messages to those businesses should be and how the collective business community can engage smaller companies who don’t see climate change as ‘their’ issue.
- Emphasise the benefits of collaboration, outlining the ways that businesses in the region can do better collectively.
- Discuss what good will look like in 12 months’ time, both challenging and highlighting what we hope the Group will have achieved and what longer term steps it needs to be focused on.

In so doing we are wanting to create a framework to align action, showcase exemplar and best practice and shape how the region will move forward together in partnership – with practical steps but staying true to the long term aims and objectives.

The Thames Valley Chamber is part of the accredited British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) network. As you know the BCC will have a strong presence at COP26 and have been instrumental in supporting our Windsor Debate and wider policy activity on this topic. A copy of this letter will be shared with its Director General, Shevaun Haviland to help inform their input to the event.

Finally, on behalf of our members, I wish you and the Government every success at COP26. The Thames Valley, the UK, and the planet need the right outcomes to secure a sustainable future for all – we have confidence that you will deliver and even greater confidence you will have time later this year, or next, to meet your Thames Valley and constituency businesses.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Britton
Chief Executive

cc: Shevaun Haviland - Director General, British Chamber of Commerce

About the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce

The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC) is one of the largest accredited Chambers within the UK and the only accredited Chamber of Commerce for the Thames Valley region. The Chamber is a proven centre of excellence for trade and inward investment services.

Representing over 4,000 companies in membership, with an economy estimated in size to be more than £83,848m (2015), it is home to over 115,000 businesses, including: 11 of the world's top 15 tech companies; the No.1 University in the world (Oxford); fastest growing city (Reading) in the UK (EY); once again, the two highest performing cities (Oxford and Reading) according to PwC; the second largest trading city in the UK (Slough); the most productive city per capita (Slough) (Centre for Cities) and the No.1 region, outside of London, for attracting inward investment. In addition, the Thames Valley Chamber credits a range of impressive statistics:

- 295,000 combined number of staff employed by members
- 5000+ number of active trade customers
- £1,692,474,094– the value of international trade enabled in 2018
- Average 150 new trade customers each year
- 178 countries trading with our customers
- 83 sectors represented by members and international trade customers
- Consistently one of the UK's most attractive locations for attracting inward investment
- 65% of international companies setting up or expanding in the Thames Valley have been supported by TVCC.