**Chris Hinchliff**
Member of Parliament for North East Hertfordshire
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
☏ 01462 415153
✉ chris.hinchliff.mp@parliament.uk

Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

10th November 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to urge the Government not to weaken the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) mandate.

The Labour Government has made history by recognising the climate crisis as a national security risk and in doing so advanced the national and international debate on the consequences of climate catastrophe. This includes our ability to ensure food remains available and affordable in the UK, as well as the heightened risk of conflict, forced displacement and humanitarian crises. The Government's concerning decision on Jackdaw is difficult to reconcile with this and will be compounded if we now take a step backwards on the ZEV mandate.

The Climate Change Committee's Progress Report estimates that half of the emissions reductions needed to meet the Government's 2030 targets are expected to come from the surface transport, buildings and industry sectors. Surface transport is the highest emitting of these sectors and accounts for the most significant emissions reductions in the Government's plans over the next decade. The ZEV mandate is central to delivering these reductions and the CCC was unequivocal: "It is essential that this year's review of the mandate does not lead to further concessions." Research by Transport & Environment suggests that cutting the 2030 target could reduce the emissions savings delivered by the UK's flagship transport decarbonisation policy by as much as 60%. This would undermine the Government's wider Net Zero ambitions and our credibility as a climate leader on the world stage. Our manufacturers have met their compliance requirements in both 2024 and 2025 and whilst there might be a case for reforms that help accelerate growth in zero-emission technology, crucially, this must not come at the expense of the mandate's core purpose.

I welcome the Government's commitment to reindustrialisation and restoring well-paid manufacturing jobs. The UK has a proud automotive heritage, and the Government's Industrial Strategy must seize the opportunity to position British industry as a leader in green technology as an engine of productive growth. British industry faces fierce competition from global rivals, including Chinese manufacturers whose EV industry has received more than $230 billion in state assistance. This competition will not disappear if Britain weakens the ZEV mandate, particularly given that Chinese manufacturers are also expanding their market share in conventional petrol and diesel vehicles. Diluting the mandate would be a backward-looking distraction from the urgent need for a coordinated industrial strategy to develop our workforce and manufacturing capacity to put Britain on a competitive footing for the years ahead.

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The Prime Minister's recognition that the state must be prepared to intervene in the national interest to provide stability and long-term direction where market forces alone cannot deliver, should be applied in this context. Our Labour Government has a role to play in reversing the decades-long decline and fragmentation of British industry that followed the neoliberal settlement of the 1980s. There is no quick, technocratic fix to the structural challenges posed by international competition, and weakening the ZEV mandate will not substitute for the long-term investment needed to secure our manufacturing future. This is a moment to put the Prime Minister's approach into practice: embracing the technologies of the future, creating jobs and rebuilding Britain's industrial strength, rather than diverting investment and attention towards prolonging dependence solely on existing technologies.

Trump's war in Iran has exposed once again that a country dependent on fossil fuels will always be an economically vulnerable one. The transition away from fossil fuels is vital to taking back control of our future from profit-driven oil and gas companies and far-flung petro states. The longer our roads remain dominated by internal combustion engine vehicles, the longer people will remain vulnerable to supply chain shocks and the high costs of filling up at the pump.

There are already clear benefits to the transition, Research from Imperial College London has linked the introduction of London's ULEZ to improved lung growth in children, reversing some of the harm associated with exposure to air pollution. And analysis by Carbon Brief estimates that UK drivers can save around £80 by charging a family-sized electric car at home rather than buying petrol to cover the same distance.

We must also have the political courage to move beyond the confines of the debate set by the centre and right to lead a genuine modal shift towards public and active transport – as the Prime Minister rightly delivered during his time as Mayor of Manchester. In Westminster, our Labour Government must build on that approach by making the most of the opportunities presented by rail nationalisation to bring down the cost of train travel, while giving local authorities the funding they need to use their new bus franchising powers to connect isolated communities. Public transport must sit alongside zero-emission vehicles as part of a transport system where it is easy and affordable to use the most environmentally efficient form of transport for each journey.

There is a world of opportunity in building a transport system and manufacturing base that anticipates future demand from consumers and businesses, and positions British industry to lead in meeting it. That means developing our capacity to manufacture electric cars alongside the next generation of zero-emission buses, investing in rail infrastructure and embracing other opportunities presented in the white heat of new technologies.

I urge the Government to use the power of the state to shape a better future. We cannot afford a short-sighted approach to our industrial future, nor can the threat of climate catastrophe and the living standards disaster it will bring be an afterthought.

Yours sincerely,



**Chris Hinchliff MP**