



Rt. Hon. Jacinda Ardern
Prime Minister
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

CC: Hon. David Parker; Hon. Phil Twyford; Hon. Shane Jones; Hon. James Shaw

8 April 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

Restoring Aotearoa – a recovery for people and planet

Last month, the Government made a courageous decision to place the country in lockdown to eliminate COVID-19 and save lives. This has had a significant impact on the economy, on jobs and on our communities and the Government is seeking proposals to help New Zealand recover.

New Zealand can create jobs and transform the economy and also tackle the other crises facing our country: climate change, decline in native species, poor freshwater quality, and stresses in our ocean world.

The economic recovery should restore the environment to the heart of our society; we know a healthy population is dependent on a healthy environment. Two decisions will be crucial: what kind of projects the Government supports and what environmental bottom lines will apply to those projects.

The signatories to this letter welcome that Ministers are particularly interested in investments that modernise the economy and set it up to achieve sustainable productivity into the future. New Zealand needs a fundamental reset of our economic management. We urge you to invest in projects and new jobs that build resilience against future shocks and transform the economy into one that serves both people and nature.

Projects chosen by the Government should:

- Shift away from volume towards value,
- Build a primary sector that supports and restores healthy ecosystems,
- Build an economy that transitions New Zealand towards meeting the targets in the Zero Carbon Act

Our proposals will transform the energy, transport and primary production sectors, improve water quality and the protection of biodiversity on private land, transform fisheries and undertake large scale protection and restoration of natural ecosystems – our green infrastructure.

Much of this work is job rich, practical, able to be rolled out in the regions and is suitable for redeploying many of the workers whose jobs have been lost, including tradespeople and workers in the tourism, fisheries and forestry sectors. We are very willing to work with Ministers, their staff and Departmental officials to progress these ideas. The Government could progress many of these immediately, although others will take longer.

It will be important to avoid the trap of focussing on projects whose only virtue is that they are currently in the pipeline and shovel ready. These projects might entrench current patterns in the economy and not deliver the transformation Ministers are seeking.

Examples of the transformational projects we favour include:

- Electrification and expansion of the rail network
- Direct funding for a nationwide upgrade of water, sewage and stormwater infrastructure
- Insulating every under-insulated property in the country
- Cleaning up legacy waste sites
- Investing in electric transport including buses and EV charging networks
- Establishing a dedicated fund for the transition to more sustainable agriculture
- Funding the surveying and protection of nature on private land
- Substantially increasing regional and national pest and weed control
- Creating a Conservation Corps to work with DOC for improved conservation outcomes
- Transforming fishing by funding the transition to low impact, sustainable fishing methods and digital monitoring
- Installing new solar and wind capacity and upgrading the electricity grid

- Support for rooftop solar and household batteries
- Expanding cycle ways and safe, active transport.

We understand the urgency with which the Government wants to make decisions and approve projects, but we urge you to properly assess the social and environmental impacts, and to not compromise on environmental bottom lines. New Zealand must avoid another Clyde Dam fiasco, the Opuha Dam collapse and the toxic legacy of poorly regulated development in the past.

We cannot build a better New Zealand economy and at the same time store up problems for the future because environmental bottom lines were ignored, or corners cut. We seek your reassurance that the bottom lines in conservation, resource management and fisheries-related laws will be maintained throughout this time. We would also expect Tiriti principles to be upheld and that marginalised groups are at the forefront of designing and receiving the assistance they deserve.

Younger New Zealanders will carry the cost of economic recovery for decades, at the same time that the burden of climate change will increasingly fall on them. We urge the Government to ensure the recovery is one that builds a fairer, better and more sustainable future for them.

Yours sincerely



Guy Salmon, Ecologic



Gary Taylor, EDS



Lisa McLaren, Generation Zero



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