



To:
Hon Dr David Clark
Hon Shane Jones
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Eugenie Sage
Hon Jenny Salesa
Hon James Shaw
Hon Phil Twyford
Hon Dr Megan Woods

1st May 2020

Sustainability Trust - Future of Economy Post COVID19

We are writing to all of you, at this time of crisis, as the national decision makers guiding our long term economic recovery, to encourage you to invest in solutions that will create a low carbon, climate resilient and inclusive economy. This once in a generation opportunity must not be missed.

Sustainability Trust is a not-for-profit organisation with a focus on supporting people in the Wellington region to live in warm, dry homes and assist them to reduce their impact on the environment. We work across the region installing insulation and heating, providing sustainability advice and education, and a host of other initiatives promoting urban sustainability. We also contribute to sustainability-focused programmes nationally through a range of partner organisations including Community Energy Network, Zero Waste Network, and Environment Hubs Aotearoa (EHA). Our impact in the community is set out in our [Annual Report](#).

Like all businesses, Sustainability Trust has been experiencing extreme challenges during the COVID19 crisis. With the help of the NZ Government and our own financial reserves, we have been able to keep our 52 staff in employment. We have been continuing to work as much as possible during Level 4, including exploring new ways to support our community during lockdown, such as the provision of a free home energy helpline and sustainability at home webinars. Under Level 3, we will be resuming more services and remain optimistic, but we do face uncertain times.

Looking after our staff and our community has been our highest priority. We are grateful for the support of various NZ Government Ministries and Wellington City Council, who continue to support our various work programmes. These programmes include the Warmer Kiwi homes subsidised insulation/heating programmes funded by EECA and WCC as well as the MfE Waste Minimisation Fund, and Community Environment Fund, that support our work in communities and schools. Our social enterprise model is enabling us to maintain our community programmes through this period and beyond, as well as continuing to look after the 30 volunteers who regularly contribute time to support our programmes.

There is an opportunity now to “build back better”, implementing solutions already available to us, to create an economy based on the pillars of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We agree with the Sustainable Business Network that the Government should only invest in initiatives that reduce carbon, pollution and waste, and directly improve the wellbeing of every New Zealander throughout the multi-generational long term. Research has shown that a shift to a greener economy can create millions of new jobs globally if the right policies are put in place. We can not afford to return to normal. Prioritisation of spending should not tie us into further environmental degradation, but build a low carbon, resilient future for us all.

The Trust is committed to remaining and growing our contribution as an active partner with the government and the wider community. The Trust already delivers a range of programmes that have an impact on emissions,



Solutions for sustainable living

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and these are ready to grow in size and scope. We are well positioned to facilitate and lead other new programmes/projects ourselves and with community partners. With a large community, and face-to-face reach of over five thousand households per year as well as an increasing number of businesses, we continue to be an active partner in cutting net emissions to zero by 2050.

Our top priorities for where money should be spent in any post COVID-19 recovery package are:

Tackle energy hardship: fast tracking recommendations in the Electricity Price Review by investing in programmes and direct support for households in energy hardship. A widening of the scope and scale of home energy efficiency programmes such as Warmer Kiwi Homes (EECA), Warm Up Wellington and Home Energy Savers (WCC) is needed.

Improve housing standards: strengthening the Healthy Homes Standards to eliminate provisions for exemptions for the worst performing properties will help the most vulnerable tenants stay warm and dry. Central government through the Infrastructure Fund investments has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve the quality and heating costs of low-income households in the region. Expand the remit of the standards to bring homes up to the NZ Green Building Council's HomeFit standard.

Support circular economy: prioritise systems that value our resources including waste, water and energy. Support collaboration within, and between, industry sectors so that opportunities to reduce resource use, support local business and create jobs are realised.

Reduce waste to landfill: we support the work the Government has been implementing, including regulated product stewardship, an increase in the landfill levy that will generate funding for investment to reduce waste to landfill, and an Investment plan that focuses on local solutions. Focus must be on waste minimisation including creation of community resource recovery and reuse hubs for business and householders.

Divert food waste: recognise the role of community level systems to deal with food waste, these reduce the burden on centralised systems, increase community resilience and social connectedness, and regenerate soil. Sustainability Trust, Kaicycle and Growspace Wellington are currently trialling community composting hubs with support from WCC; there are many other examples nationally.

Build local food resilience: support urban farming and other local food growing. The Recovery Farm Package proposed by For the Love of Bees and the Urban Farmers' Alliance, would create jobs and see communities becoming more resilient, self sufficient and more socially connected. Nationwide the package could create 20,000 jobs if they get the right funding and access to land now.

Development of community energy infrastructure: supporting development of community energy infrastructure through national and regional power purchase agreements.

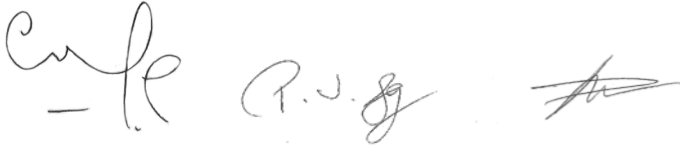
Prioritise walkers, cyclists and electric vehicles: provide infrastructure that prioritises walkers and cyclists in our urban areas. Bring forward any planned subsidies for business and private purchases of electric vehicles; support hubs for electric car parking to keep cars off inner city streets.

Support social enterprises: fund social enterprises to support these transitions. Organisations such as ourselves, and other members of the Community Energy Network / Environment Hub Aotearoa / Zero Waste Network, are already supporting the priorities above through delivery of programmes, provision of education; facilitation of industry partnerships and provision of networks to divert products and materials from landfill.



We will also be writing to Wellington City Council and other regional councils we work with, recognising the role of both local and national government in building back better. In summary, we have a vision of Aotearoa as a low carbon resilient inclusive society, and we believe the investment available now should be committed to make this a reality.

Yours sincerely



Georgie Ferrari – Chief Executive, Philip Squire – Fair Energy Manager; Susie Robertson – Communities Manager
(Senior Leadership Team, Sustainability Trust)