

The Rt Hon Caroline Flint MP  
Shadow Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011

Dear Caroline,

I am writing to you to ask you to clarify Labour's position on Feed-in Tariffs and energy bills. In recent weeks, you and the Leader of the Opposition have repeatedly attacked the government over rising energy prices. You will therefore understand my surprise at your reaction to the government's reductions to subsidies for solar power.

The government remains committed to Feed-in Tariffs but without urgent action, the entire planned budget for the next four years would be used up by 2012-13, if not sooner. Our new domestic tariff levels for solar will put us on a par with Germany when their own tariff reductions come into force in January.

As you know, any breach of the £867 million budget for Feed-in Tariffs would impact directly on consumers' energy bills. But you described yesterday's steps to keep within budget as 'yet another example of a government which is out of touch'. Without urgent action, by 2014-15 FITs for solar PV could cost consumers in excess of £1 billion per year, adding around £26 to annual domestic electricity bills in 2020.

Through your kneejerk opposition to our changes, you are effectively calling on the government to substantially increase energy bills. Your comments place you on the side of the solar power lobby and against hard-pressed families struggling to pay their bills. I am afraid they starkly expose the cynicism of the position that Labour has taken on energy prices.

You also stated yesterday that 'Labour started the process of Feed-in Tariffs and we remain proud of it'. Yet on 30 April 2008, you and your party voted against Feed-in Tariffs. The last government was forced to introduce FITs only after it was defeated in the House of Lords.

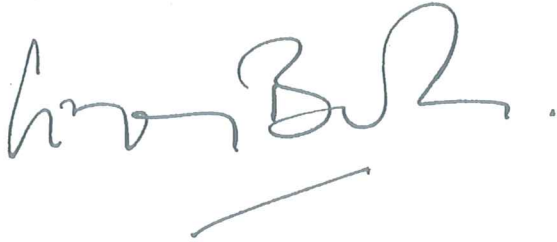
Finally, you euphemistically said yesterday that the Feed-in Tariff scheme 'may have needed adjustment as costs fell'. We have made precisely the adjustments needed to keep within the £867 million FITs budget.

Given these contortions, I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

- If you are opposing measures to keep FITs within the £867 million budget, how much more spending would you allow?
- By how much would you be prepared to increase the average household's energy bill in order to maintain high tariffs for solar?
- If Labour are proud to have started FITs, why did you and your party vote against them on 30 April 2008?

People deserve clarity from the Labour Party following this kneejerk opposition. In the interest of open and honest debate, I hope you will feel able to respond promptly to these questions.

Yours ever,



**GREGORY BARKER**