

The Rt. Hon Kwasi Kwarteng, M.P.  
Secretary of State for Business,  
Energy and Industrial Strategy  
Department for Business, Energy  
and Industrial Strategy  
1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET

**Councillor Emily Smith**  
**Leader of the Council**

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Dear Mr Kwarteng,

I am writing on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council to express our grave concerns regarding Britain's cost of living crisis. While the Council recognises that there are global inflationary pressures, specific factors – such as soaring energy prices and tax rises – are exacerbating the situation here in the UK. We are, therefore, calling upon HM Government to take further, urgent, meaningful action to support individuals and households through these challenging times.

The Vale would also like to highlight the particular problems that rising fuel and energy costs have on rural communities. The lack of public transport means that residents in these areas lack an effective alternative to the car and are, therefore, disproportionately affected by spiralling fuel costs (an issue that is further magnified by these communities' relative remoteness from places of work, essential services etc). Moreover, a significant number of homes within the countryside are not connected to the standard power networks but instead use alternative sources of energy such as bottled gas and heating oil which have risen dramatically in price as they do not fall under Ofgem's price cap.

To help alleviate the worst effects of the cost of living crisis, we are, therefore, calling for:

- immediate financial support for consumers of heating oil, bottled gas, solid fuels, those reliant on generators for electricity and those on prepayment meters.
- an increase in the Rural Fuel Duty Rate Relief and an expansion in the number of rural areas covered.
- the consideration of a reduction in VAT to 17.5 per cent to help put money back into the pockets of families, boost the economy and support local retailers.

- the delivery of a real and immediate increase in investment in UK renewables.
- an energy plan for the UK which immediately reduces costs for the end user and leads to the decarbonisation of the UK energy network in the long term.

The Vale believes that only firm, decisive and bold action – such as the measures outlined above – will help to ease the financial pressures that many individuals and households are currently facing.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Emily Smith  
Leader of the Council