

President & Principal  
Professor Edward Byrne AC

James Clerk Maxwell Building  
57 Waterloo Road  
London SE1 8WA

Tel: +44 (0) 207 848 3434  
Fax: +44 (0) 207 848 3430  
principal@kcl.ac.uk  
www.kcl.ac.uk



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Mr Craig Bennett  
Chief Executive  
Friends of the Earth  
The Printworks  
139 Clapham Rd  
London SW9 OHP

Dear Mr Bennett

Thank you for your recent letter outlining your interest in finding out more about King's College London's approach to helping the world meet the challenge of climate change, against the backdrop of the landmark Paris Agreement late last year.

Here at King's we take our responsibility to help tackle pressing global challenges seriously. We are a highly impact-oriented and instinctively inter-disciplinary university and we see climate change and the broader sustainability policy agenda as an important area of focus as we seek to make the world a better place.

**Our role as an institution with a carbon footprint and a socially responsible mission:**

In December 2015, King's became one of the first UK universities, and one of the first 1,000 organisations in the world to sign up to the Paris Pledge.

By taking the pledge, King's has committed to play its part in supporting the objectives set out at the COP21 conference.

In my view, non-state actors, such as universities, will be integral in sending a credible, coherent signal that the agreement can be met or exceeded. We were proud, as a global university, to sign up to this agreement to fully meet our environmental responsibilities and will also seek to promote public awareness and debate about climate change and other environmental threats through our internal and public engagement activity over time.

King's is actively seeking to reduce carbon emissions and limits its contribution on climate change. The aim is to reduce carbon emissions by 43 per cent by 2020 against a 2005 baseline. By 2015 we have reduced it by over 8.8%, but clearly recognise the need to accelerate progress.

We are seeking to step up efforts through measures such as the installation of renewable energy sources, refurbishing buildings to a high standard of sustainability and encouraging staff and students to adopt positive behaviours that help support a lower carbon footprint.

We've also recently created a Socially Responsible Investment Review Committee which is developing a revised, more comprehensive framework, in relation to the university's practices in relation to its endowment fund that is consistent without our ambition to support the transition to lower carbon pathway for the global economy. It is my expectation that the university will move quickly to implement promising emerging recommendations in the 2016-17 academic year and beyond.

### **Climate change and air quality in an urban context:**

The UK already has an ambitious target in primary legislation to address climate change even before the Paris Agreement. The Climate Change Act of 2008 set a target for an 80% reduction in carbon dioxide equivalents by 2050 (on a 1990 base). There are different ways of reaching this target with different air quality outcomes and hence different impacts on public health.

King's College London's Environmental Research Group is modelling a range of scenarios to assess these impacts. The work will quantify the potentially significant benefits to health that could accrue from adopting 'clean' pathways to the target and the benefits that could be foregone if scenarios with higher air pollution emissions are adopted.

More broadly, the Environmental Research Group at King's plays a big role in helping the GLA, Transport for London, and other cities build the evidence base needed to tackle air pollution and helps champion policies for a lower carbon future.

King's is also in the midst of establishing a new inter-disciplinary Centre for Urban Science and Progress (CUSP London), linked to a sister organisation CUSP New York, which will focus on data science and smart cities technologies to help bolster health and wellbeing and ensure a lower carbon future.

As well as undertaking applied research and innovation projects, CUSP London will help train a new generation of data scientists who can help cities and other urban conurbations more effectively meet the challenge of overseeing sustainable growth.

## **The role of law, social sciences and public policy at King's in helping to address climate change:**

The Department of Geography within the Faculty of Social Sciences and Public Policy at King's has a dedicated King's Climate research hub called King's Climate. Across the Department of Geography academics undertake a range of research, education and wider societal engagement which addresses many of the questions raised by the challenges of a changing climate. But these are not motivated simply by 'serving' any single scientific and political target agenda. While the Paris Agreement ambition to contain temperatures to below 2 degrees (if not 1.5) can be welcomed, it does raise many critical questions which geographers are researching answers to. For instance;

- ❖ How do socio-technical transitions, in energy and infrastructure, occur? What are the most effective points of intervention? Who wins, who loses from these transitions? What forms of governance are most effective, and which most fair?
- ❖ To meet the Paris targets, new technologies of carbon capture (on land and from air) will be needed. 'Whose land' will be used for carbon sequestration? What activities will it displace? How will human freedoms and indigenous land rights be respected?
- ❖ How should the ambitions of the Paris Agreement be reconciled with other legitimate social and economic goals, and wider human aspirations for meeting basic human needs?

The Department of Geography also offers two master's level programmes relating to climate change, one of which is the MSc Climate Change: Environment, Science & Policy. The study of climate change is also built into a number of undergraduate programmes.

Our School of Global Affairs – which unifies a number of specialist institutes covering BRIC, emerging economies and developing nations – also offer a range of postgraduate programmes relating to the issues of sustainable and inclusive development where a focus on the implications and challenges of tackling climate change is embedded.

The International Development Institute within the School of Global Affairs has a dedicated group of researchers looking at the sustainability of natural resources in emerging economies.

There is also a growing number of researchers in our Dickson Poon School of Law actively conducting research on climate mitigation law, climate governance, the regulation of climate finance, legal aspects of adaptation to climate change, the law of disasters (including climate change-related disasters), and climate change adjudication.

This research includes ongoing individual and collaborative research projects, as well as public engagement and capacity building work. The Paris Agreement represents an important milestone that will be relevant to much of this work going forward.

In conclusion, King's is supportive of the goals of the Paris Agreement while recognising that there are profound implications that require detailed examination. It is my hope that our research and education programmes at King's will make significant contributions to public knowledge and deliberations about how best to achieve these goals.

If you would welcome more information, our Head of External Affairs & Government Relations, Daniel Cremin, would be happy to facilitate a meeting with the most suitable colleagues. He can be contacted via 020 7848 4071 or via [daniel.cremin@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:daniel.cremin@kcl.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Byrne', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Edward Byrne AC  
President & Principal