Senior health professionals call for urgent climate briefing of all MPs by the chief scientific adviser: open letter to PM

Dear prime minister,

We wish to make you aware of our concern for the health of Angus Rose, a 52 year old man, who at the time of writing is on day 34 of a hunger strike outside Parliament, consuming only fluids, vitamins, and minerals.

His not unreasonable demand is that all members of parliament including the cabinet are briefed on the climate crisis by Patrick Vallance, the government’s chief scientific adviser. This is because you described the briefing you received from Patrick Vallance on 28 January 2020 as a “Road to Damascus” moment.1 The climate crisis has been described by more than 200 health journals, in an unprecedented joint editorial last year, as risking “catastrophic harm to health that will be impossible to reverse.”2

Like our fellow scientist colleagues, we are not all in agreement with the tactic of a public hunger strike.3 However, we agree it is essential that the latest scientific evidence on the climate crisis is officially and openly communicated to the cabinet and members of parliament by the government’s chief scientific adviser, just as was done during the height of the covid-19 crisis. We believe this would help the government take the urgent action required to decarbonise the country at the scale and speed required.

Those of us who have spoken to Angus Rose believe him to be of sound mind. He says he does not want to die but is prepared to do so because he is “terrified” for the future of his nephews and niece. It is our ardent wish that a solution can be found that will prevent this. His health is now precarious. He has already passed one checkpoint which indicates severe risk to life: a drop of 18% body weight. We ask you urgently to work to resolve this situation before it reaches the point of no return.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Godlee, former editor in chief, The BMJ

And in alphabetical order, all signing in a personal capacity;

Mike Gill, former regional director of public health, south-east region
Isky Gordon, professor paediatric imaging, University College London
Andy Haines, professor of environmental change and public health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Malcolm Green, professor emeritus of respiratory medicine, Imperial College London
Phil Hammond, retired NHS doctor
Mark Harber, associate professor and consultant nephrologist, UCL department of Renal Medicine
Mark Hayden, paediatric intensive care consultant London, medical director Ride for their Lives
Alison Holmes, professor of infectious diseases, Imperial College London
Richard Horton, editor in chief, The Lancet
Parveen Kumar, emerita professor of medicine, Barts and the London School of Medicine
Gillian Leng, professor and former chief executive of the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE)
Patrick Maxwell, regius professor of physic and head of the School of Clinical Medicine, University of Cambridge
Mike McKirdy, president, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
Hugh Montgomery, professor of intensive care medicine, University College London
John Moxham, emeritus professor of Respiratory Medicine, King’s College London
David Pencheon, honorary professor of health and sustainable development
Rob Poole, professor of social psychiatry, Bangor University
Maggie Rae, president, Faculty of Public Health
Richard Smith, chair, UK Health Alliance on Climate Change
Arulkumaran Sabaratnam, professor, Institute of Global Health Policy Innovation, Imperial College, London
Robin Stott, UK Health Alliance for Climate Change
James Underwood, emeritus professor of pathology, University of Sheffield

Competing interests: FG is a Trustee of the Eden Project, Chair of the Youth Environmental Service, and an Ambassador to the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change

1 BMJ 2022;377:o987. doi: 10.1136/bmj.o987
2 BMJ 2021;373:n6143. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n6143
3 BMJ 2022;377:o987. doi: 10.1136/bmj.o987

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