

# The National Trade Union Steel Co-ordinating Committee

Community – GMB – Unite

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The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
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Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing, on behalf of the thousands of steelworkers we represent, to communicate our profound concerns about the ongoing energy crisis, and the threat this poses to jobs, communities and industries should your government fail to appreciate and address the impact on Britain's steel companies.

Your government has been seeking to portray soaring energy prices as a global problem, but the fact is our steel companies are being hit much harder than our European competitors. Currently we are paying more than twice as much for energy as French and German producers, and in September prices spiked at an astronomical £2,500/MWh, which is a 5,000% increase on April prices.

These prices are simply not sustainable and we fear that with winter approaching, and with it the inevitable increased demand for gas and electricity, that we are on the verge of a full-blown steel crisis that will threaten jobs. Already we are seeing production pauses at our companies, unheard of at this time of year, and if your government fails to act these pauses are likely to become more frequent and more serious.

For years our steelworkers have competed with one hand tied behind their backs, due to the failure of successive governments to take action on uncompetitive energy prices. But should your government do nothing now it could be a historic mistake with devastating consequences for steelworkers, steel communities, the industries that depend on us and the economy as a whole.

Other European countries have already acted, even though they have been less severely affected, and Britain's steelworkers want to know why our politicians are sitting on their hands. Brexit was supposed to make it easier for the Government to back British industry and British jobs, but all we are seeing is the same old procrastination and excuses for doing nothing.

Our steel industry directly employs more than 32,000 workers, and twice as many again in the supply chain and local communities. Steel jobs are high quality jobs with good terms and conditions, each of which can pay 50% more than the regional average. These steel jobs



drive and sustain local economies, and are the foundation of the supply chain for other strategically important sectors including automotive, aerospace, construction and defence.

The steel industry is concentrated in areas of the country where employment opportunities can be limited including the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside and South Wales, all places you say your government wants to level-up. This energy crisis presents a golden opportunity for your government to demonstrate that levelling-up is more than just a slogan, and this is an important test of your commitment to supporting British jobs and industrial communities.

The seriousness of this situation calls for swift and decisive government action, and we look to you to provide leadership and overcome any frictions there may be between members of your cabinet. Most urgently, we need your government to implement a solution that protects our industry from the unprecedented and volatile energy prices we are experiencing. This could look like some form of a price cap for energy intensive users, it could look like immediate relief from network and transmission charges, or it could look like the suspension of government policy costs. All these approaches can be delivered, because they have already been implemented in European competitor countries that are backing their steelworkers.

We also urge your government to take this opportunity to develop a level playing field for the future, by closing the gap between British and EU energy prices which costs our industry £50 million every year. We need to close the gap to compete but also to enable us to decarbonise steelmaking, because all the available low-carbon technologies are going to require far greater use of electricity and a supportive investment and operating environment. Crucially, your government's approach to this crisis must recognise and address the structural uncompetitiveness of our energy market for industrial consumers, and clearly government-backed provision of short-term loans would not achieve that objective.

Britain needs its steel. Our industry is of critical importance to steel communities, to local and regional economies, to our national manufacturing base, for delivering a low carbon future and for our prospects as a resilient independent nation and economy going forward.

We urge you, in the strongest terms, to take appropriate action now before it is too late.

Yours sincerely,



**Roy Rickhuss CBE**  
**General Secretary**  
**Community**  
**Chair, NTUSCC**



**Harish Patel**  
**National Officer**  
**Unite**



**Ross Murdoch**  
**National Officer**  
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