Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

The Secretary of State makes a compelling case for the need for change, but will he consider a concession for those businesses that have already paid a deposit? Pennywell farm in my constituency aims to be the first carbon-neutral tourist attraction in the country and has already received a gold business award for energy conservation. It has already paid a 10% deposit, but the costs of meeting the 12 December deadline will increase its costs by 11% and it faces great difficulty as a result.

Christopher Huhne (Secretary of State, Energy and Climate Change; Eastleigh, Liberal Democrat)

I hear what my hon. Friend says, and she is not contesting the fact that there will still be a positive return. That comes back to the point I was making. People might not make as much money as they thought they would, because the scheme had not been brought into line with the fall in the cost of panels, but they will still make a positive return. My Department's key objective is to ensure that we make the transition to a low-carbon economy, not to provide excessive subsidies where they are not warranted by the action that is to be taken. If she would like to write to me with the details of her example, we will take it into account as part of the consultation. I repeat that it is a genuine consultation.

The revised tariffs will allow the feed-in tariffs to work in the way they were intended to, supporting the industry and jobs in the long term, rather than burning brightly for a few short months before fading away. The right hon. Member for Don Valley might urge on us the attractions of becoming a sort of policy Catherine-wheel in which we are all fizz, but we do not particularly want to be followed by all phutt, which is exactly what we would have if the Labour party was to have its suggestion.

I am sure that Members will join me in supporting long-term ambition across the whole green economy, rather than windfalls for the few.

The Government are committed to supporting sustainable low-carbon energy, but we cannot continue to write blank cheques. By bringing solar PV returns in line with other investment opportunities, we are guaranteeing the success of the feed-in tariff scheme as a whole, which will mean more renewable energy delivered to more households in a sustainable way.

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