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Cc: Members of NERC Council

29<sup>th</sup> July 2003

Dear Mr Richardson,

### **Re: Degrees of Capture**

Thank you for your letter of 28<sup>th</sup> April. You pointed us to your strategy publication, 'Science for a Sustainable Future', which we have read with interest, though with some disappointment.

Renewable energy appears to occupy only a tiny part of the strategy. Looking at the list on pages 12-13 of research questions under the heading 'Sustainable economies – energy, land use and hazard mitigation', six of the questions relate to energy or climate change. Of these, three relate to fossil fuels (CO2 sequestration, extending the life of non-renewable sources and gas hydrates), one to nuclear, one to land-use and just one to renewables, plus a brief mention of biofuels in another question.

Furthermore, NERC seems to be approaching the question of renewable energy in the wrong direction. Whereas all but one of the fossil fuels, nuclear and land use questions are generally positive in tone ("how can we improve..." etc), the renewables question is negative ("what are the environmental, economic and social impacts..."). It is almost as if NERC wants to support research which improves the role of fossil and nuclear energies, and which finds problems with renewables. Why not a question of "How can we improve the economics and application of renewable energies?"

Renewable energies do not appear at all on the list of priorities on pages 22-23. It is surprising that in the context of the PIU Energy Review, NERC emphasises the nuclear energy issues. The Review recommended that "an expanded role for renewables should be a key plank of future strategy", but only that "measures are needed to keep the nuclear option open . . ." – which is a rather different emphasis.

We should be grateful if you would kindly let us know NERC's budget estimates for support of renewable energies, nuclear and fossil fuels, and what proportion of the latter relates to allowing the industry to better manage its impact on the environment. If you do not have budgets as such, perhaps you might have a breakdown of past expenditure?

On the other hand, we strongly congratulate NERC on its excellent work funding study of the impacts of climate change. NERC-funded projects have made an extremely valuable contribution to the understanding of the climate change problem. The disappointment is that given NERC's extensive understanding of climate change (which is predominantly caused by the burning of fossil fuels), it continues to support the economics of the fossil fuel industry, as outlined in the *Degrees of Capture* report.

We strongly believe that it is time for NERC to cease to fund research (including and especially geological research) into fossil fuels, with the exception of research which is only to reduce the environmental impact of the industry. Until NERC makes that move, it is difficult to see the prospect of a sustainable future.

Yours sincerely,

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PLATFORM

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