Anti-Boycott Bill Template Letter to council leaders

# Letter

Dear [Council Leader],

We’re writing to you regarding the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, which justice campaigners have renamed as the Anti-Boycott Bill, currently going through Parliament.

If passed in its current form, the Anti-Boycott Bill will restrict the ability of public authorities to make ethical choices about spending and investment. Public bodies could be punished for cutting ties with companies owned by foreign states who are engaged in human rights abuses. We at **[insert group name]** believe the restrictions in the Bill undermine the democratic mandate of elected representatives to represent the moral and ethical concerns of local residents like us. Westminster should not be depriving you, and us, of this right. Our key concern in relation to the Bill lies in risk it poses to the vital and growing trend of fossil fuel divestment commitments.

***[OPTION A If the council has committed to divestment LINK TO*** [***DIVEST UK’S LIST***](https://www.divest.org.uk/council-motions/)***]***

We thank you for taking action on the climate crisis by passing a policy to divest from fossil fuels. This Bill presents a serious threat to such policies and could have a chilling effect on further councils following your example. Your council could be disincentivised in future from making ethical investment and procurement decisions in response to campaigning, because of fear of contravening the ban

**[OPTION B If the council doesn’t have a divestment policy]**

In this critical decade where decisions on whether or not to fund the fossil fuel industry will decide if we hit a tipping point to irreversible runaway climate change, it should not be for Westminster to decide what our financial, moral and ethical decisions should be for our local council.

We believe the Anti-Boycott Bill could have a chilling impact on councils and their decision makers speaking in an official capacity, as they would not be able to publish public statements indicating that they intend to act in a way that would contravene the ban, or that they would, in theory, intend to act that way if not for the ban.

The fossil fuel industry understands the threat posed to them by local government and other public bodies. However, the Anti-Boycott Bill will hamper effective campaigning which challenges their climate wrecking practices.

* Local authorities invest £16 billion of the Local Government Pension Scheme in the fossil fuel industry, according to [recent analysis](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/revealed-ps16bn-local-government-pensions-fuelling-climate-crisis) by Platform and Friends of the Earth.
* Almost one in five deaths in the UK is linked to fine particle pollution from road traffic, power generation and other activities that involve burning petrol, diesel, coal and gas, (Harvard University/ University College London – [read the full article](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-pollution-fossil-fuels-deaths-b1799380.html)).
* Fossil fuel divestment globally has led to a combined value of over $40 trillion being diverted away from polluting industries to greener alternatives.
* According to UK Divest, the Northern Ireland Assembly and Senedd pension funds have committed to divest from fossil fuels as have the pension funds of five local authorities, and many more have passed supportive motions.
* The governments of Wales and Scotland both oppose the Anti-Boycott Bill.
* Quote the statistics [from Platform’s online tool](https://divest.platformlondon.org) on your council's current fossil fuel investments.

Just as Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) played an instrumental role in opposing the apartheid regime in South Africa, today BDS is a legitimate means for ordinary people to engage with local decision makers to have their voices heard on the pressing issue of tackling climate change.   This is a matter of urgency as the Anti-Boycott Bill is rapidly making its passage through the House of Lords and in a few weeks could be back in the House of Commons for final votes.

To see more about the Bill, you may like to [read this webpage from Friends of the Earth](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/system-change/how-antiboycott-bill-threatens-climate-action) or read the Friends of the Earth [briefing for MPs from the second reading.](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/system-change/friends-earth-second-reading-briefing-economic-activity-public-bodies-bill-june-2023)

Our councils must have their autonomy to take bold action for the good of people and planet protected. **[Insert group name]** wants to see freedom of speech protected and the independence of councils to take bold action for our climate maintained. The Anti-Boycott Bill threatens all of this.

Please act by making a public statement formally opposing the Anti-Boycott Bill and write to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to make known your opposition to the bill.

Yours faithfully,

Full Name

Postcode

Group Name

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