

Dear Caroline Rush and the British Fashion Council,

On the 1st May 2019 the UK made history by becoming the first country in the world to declare a climate emergency. By December 2020, a total of 15 countries had followed Britain's lead and declared a climate emergency, along with many more local councils, associations and institutions around the world. We hoped then that we would begin to see an immediate and meaningful response to the climate and ecological crisis from governments and industries worldwide. Three years on, commitments remain vague and insubstantial in the face of this monumental man-made threat to the continued existence of life on earth.

For four years now, we have been calling on the British Fashion Council to take radical and immediate action on climate change. As the BFC website itself admits, 'the fashion and textiles industry has a significant adverse environmental and social impact and is cited as the joint third highest emitter of greenhouse gases globally.' Yet the fashion industry's complicity in the climate and ecological crisis is far more extensive and complex than this statement suggests. The industry remains heavily reliant on the continued extraction of fossil fuels for the production of synthetic fibres. Unregulated 'open-loop' production methods are responsible for land and water pollution on an industrial scale, with devastating impacts for ecological systems and local communities in the Global South. Without a functioning circular model for the reuse or recycling of clothing, the fashion industry is responsible for creating immense volumes of textiles waste each year. It is frighteningly clear that we no longer afford to ignore these issues or continue to make insubstantial commitments towards incremental progress: change must be swift and extensive.

We are calling on the British Fashion Council to cancel London Fashion Week. The bi-annual showcasing of new collections only serves to drive constantly changing trends. The current model of continuous consumption is pushing our planetary boundaries past the point of collapse, yet the industry's global growth is only projected to increase. Even if the industry was able to transition fully to sustainable materials and practices, we would still be manufacturing, consuming and discarding clothing at an unsustainable pace. We urgently need to transition to a new system in which clothing is treated as a valuable and long-lasting commodity. Cancelling London Fashion Week would remove the impetus to churn out collection after collection in order to remain 'on the pulse' and would send a clear message to the industry worldwide that it is time to reevaluate and reimagine how we experience fashion.

Fashion has long been celebrated and revered for being reactive, revolutionary and innovative. So as London Fashion Week reconvenes this February for more frenzied touting of new collections we are asking ourselves, how does Fashion Week remain so far out of touch with this pivotal moment in the history of humanity? Whether or not we choose to accept or acknowledge it, the climate crisis now defines us: it is time to react and adapt or to suffer total system collapse. We believe that the fashion industry, powered by so many brilliant and creative minds, has the potential to reform itself so that it may continue to inspire and serve generations to come. However, we are rapidly running out of time. We need radical transformation now.

In 2019, you responded to our demands by suggesting that Fashion Week is a platform that will enable change and facilitate discussion surrounding fashion's systemic issues. With all due respect, the progress we have seen has simply not been sufficient. In fact, The Pulse of the Fashion Industry 2019 update found that the rate of social and environmental performance progress had actually slowed from the previous year. The status quo remains steadfastly in place, proving that BFC's current approach will not deliver the impact needed to transform the industry with the speed of progress that is required. Pressing pause on the destructive treadmill of continuous consumption will allow the industry the time and space it so desperately needs in order to regenerate into a truly sustainable and ethical model. Once again, we implore you to

Cancel Fashion Week in 2022 and instead reconvene with industry leaders for crisis talks. This is a course of action which befits the severity of the crisis we are facing.

OUR DEMANDS

TELL THE TRUTH

The BFC must use its platform to tell the truth about the extent of the fashion industry's complicity in both the climate and ecological crisis and human rights abuses worldwide. The BFC must not overemphasise the minor commitments and progress towards positive change but also speak openly and loudly about the major shortfalls of the fashion industry and the extent of system change that is yet to be achieved. The BFC must also put pressure on regulatory bodies to take legal action against greenwashing advertising campaigns which mislead consumers and are a barrier to meaningful progress.

ACT NOW. REDESIGN THE SYSTEM

The BFC must cancel London Fashion Week in 2022 to send a clear signal to the fashion industry that it cannot continue with business as usual. The fashion industry must immediately transition away from its reliance on the use of fossil fuels for textiles manufacturing. It must work towards a closed-loop system to replace the current linear model in which resources are taken and turned into waste. Lowering impact and buying less is not sufficient: we must transition to a circular model in which garments are fully recyclable once no longer wearable.

LEGISLATE. WHERE IS THE GOVERNMENT?

We do not have the time to rely on gradual, consumer and innovator led change. The BFC must pressure governments to introduce laws and regulations that will end the prolific environmental and social injustices perpetrated by the fashion industry. Brands must be required by law to achieve full supply chain transparency so that they can be held accountable. Brands must also be required by law to ensure that all garment workers in their supply chains are provided with a living wage and safe working conditions.

The climate and ecological emergency is a *crisis* and we must respond accordingly. Extinction Rebellion Fashion Action will continue to put pressure on the British Fashion Council until there is sufficient action taken in line with the seriousness of the threat of the climate emergency.

With love and rage,

Extinction Rebellion Fashion Action