

# ACTION AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

## International Action

As climate change is a global issue, international action is needed. In 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed by 189 countries at the Earth Summit in Rio. However, it failed to set binding targets and has therefore had limited effect.

As a result of the Kyoto Protocol, developed in 1997, 37 countries reduced global emissions by over 10% (the UK achieved a 12% reduction). However, this was not enough to offset the increasing emissions from other industrialising countries, which meant global emissions grew over the same period.

In 2015, every country in the world signed the Paris Agreement, the first truly global effort to reduce carbon emissions, which aims to rapidly cut greenhouse gas emissions, particularly carbon dioxide, to keep global warming below 2°C.

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published a report which suggested that we could limit global warming to 1.5°C, and that the previous target of 2°C would have catastrophic impacts to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth. It warned that the world could potentially hit the 1.5°C warming by 2030 if emissions carry on as they are (though this date could be as late as 2052) and that serious, large-scale action is urgently needed in the short term if we are to have any chance of avoiding a 1.5°C rise.

## How is the UK tackling climate change?

The UK was the first country to set legally binding carbon-reduction targets in the 2008 Climate Change Act, to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 (from 1990 levels) and agree interim five-year 'carbon budgets' that take the country progressively towards that 80% target.



In May 2019, the Committee on Climate Change produced a report called Net Zero, recommending a new target for the UK to be net zero greenhouse gases by 2050, which could be achieved with known technologies and behavioural changes within the same budget allowed for the previous target. In June 2019, the updated target was legislated by the UK Government.

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Reaching net zero emissions requires an annual reduction of emissions that is 50% higher than under the UK's previous 2050 target and 30% higher than achieved on average since 1990. This is an indication of how substantial the step up in action must be to cut emissions in every sector.

Such a step-change is only possible if clear, stable, and well-designed policies are introduced without delay. Currently, the policy framework is incomplete and contradictory. For example, the government says it wants people to cycle. However, councils can't afford to fill potholes. Meanwhile, trunk roads are getting a £30bn upgrade. Emissions from air travel are a significant contributor to GHG emissions. However, the government is expanding capacity at airports.

Similarly, there is a need to increase renewable energy generation, but policy virtually bans all new onshore wind farms which supply the UK's most cost-effective clean energy. Furthermore, incentives to install renewable technologies have been removed or greatly reduced and disincentives, such as increased Business Rates for companies installing solar PV, have been added.

The Committee on Climate Change predict that the UK is on course to miss the next two carbon budgets due to a lack of clear policies (especially regarding heat), and regularly criticise the lack of action by the UK government.

