

Briefing

12 years to save our planet: the solutions to the climate crisis.

A summary of the transformative change government must drive, and ways in which people can take action to align the UK to the 1.5°C Paris Climate Agreement.

Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and we are already feeling its impacts.

At just 1°C of warming above pre-industrial levels we are witnessing:

- **extreme weather events** like the devastating hurricanes seen across the Caribbean and the USA.
- **floods** sweeping through countries causing immense destruction.
- **droughts** that have seen taps nearly run dry in Cape Town, South Africa.
- **heatwaves** that scorch the earth, its wildlife and people.
- **rising sea levels** that threaten islands and coastal regions.
- **damage to wildlife and precious ecosystems** like the Great Barrier Reef.
- **rapid melting of Arctic sea ice** which speeds up climate change, **and much more.**

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) makes it clear we must act to limit global warming to 1.5°C or we risk catastrophic climate change.¹ The IPCC also stated we have less than 12 years to do this.

This is a clarion call for our movement and together we must rise to this challenge with renewed determination and energy.

The UK has a responsibility to act

The Paris Climate Agreement requires the world to reach net-zero¹ greenhouse gas emissions within the second half of the century, with wealthier developed countries reaching this goal earlier.

¹ Net zero means adding no more greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere than the amount being removed by carbon sinks

The world's richest 10% produce 50% of carbon emissions, compared to the poorest 50% of humanity who are responsible for just 10% of emissions.² While climate change affects us all, it is the poorest and those who have contributed the least, who are often on the frontlines of climate impacts and are some of the most vulnerable.

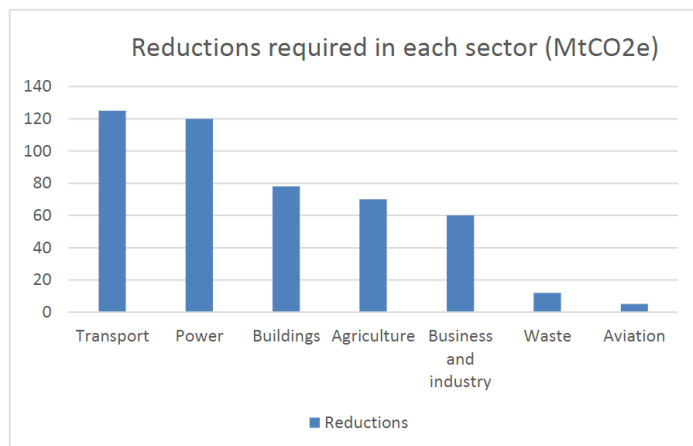


Figure 1 The reductions required to put the UK on path to net zero by 2045. (Friends of the Earth, 2018)

That is why it is critical that the UK, as both a wealthier developed nation and a significant contributor to historical greenhouse gas emissions, does everything it can to act.

Positively, the UK has at times shown leadership on climate change – with the passing of the world's first Climate Change Act in 2008 being a notable example. The Climate Change Act was made a reality by a powerful movement of many thousands -

with Friends of the Earth activists and local groups at its heart. The Act has been the driving force behind the emissions cuts we've seen in the UK – emissions are now 43% lower than 1990 levels. We can be proud of that, and we must honour the ambition of the historic Climate Change Act by making sure the UK goes further and faster to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

A pathway to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions

The Climate Change Act was based on the international aim of limiting global temperature rise to 2°C. But the scientific reality has hardened since 2008, and the international community now agrees that we should aim for 1.5°C. In the UK, Friends of the Earth believes that means net-zero emissions by 2045 and a range of ambitious policies to get us there, starting with radical and urgent action today.

Friends of the Earth has identified the bold evidence-based solutions needed to put the UK on a path to net zero by 2045 – honouring the Paris Agreement. The report can be read in full here: friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/pathway-net-zero-greenhouse-gas-emissions.

The choices the UK government makes in the coming months and next few years are critical. Large-scale investment is needed across the country to enable the transformational changes that will help avoid catastrophe. We need to build massive public pressure in support of these solutions and funding for their implementation. Friends of the Earth is committed to building and supporting the movement we need.

Outlined below are the solutions we need government to implement, the benefits they could bring to people and communities, as well as some ways you can campaign right now to help cut emissions.

1. Transport

Bring forward the date for phasing out the sale of petrol and diesel cars and vans to 2030.

Towns and cities across the UK should be transformed through investment in high quality, cheap, safe public transport, cycling and walking. Air pollution and noise from traffic would be dramatically reduced. Any cars driven would be electric or zero emission.

There are also job opportunities flowing from the development of electric vehicle manufacturing, as well as walking and cycling infrastructure. An expansion of electric rail, bus services and trams could create more jobs and help keep people moving.

Act now for clean transport: campaign to secure restrictions on fossil fuel vehicles in towns and cities through Clean Air Zones and School Streets that protect health and significantly reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Oppose cuts to public transport and fare rises that put people off travelling in a more sustainable way.

Find out more: friendsoftheearth.uk/clean-air and healthyair.org.uk.

2. Power

Speed up and significantly increase the scale of deployment of renewable power.

The UK should be powered by a home-grown renewables industry, providing jobs and clean energy at affordable prices for homes, heating, transport and industry.

Skilled development, manufacture and installation of renewable energy could see employment for many.

Act now for renewable energy: campaign to stop government pursuing dirty energy and instead invest in renewables.

Find out more: friendsoftheearth.uk/fracking and 1010uk.org.

3. Buildings

Begin to provide householders with capital grants to enable them to install insulation and low-carbon heating, as part of an area by area coordinated action plan.

Warm homes could be powered by the UK exploiting its vast renewable energy resources to provide electricity and produce hydrogen. Bills could be cheaper and no one, especially older people and those in poverty, would be forced to choose between heating and eating. There would be no fracking and imports and the use of natural gas in heating will have ceased.

Training and job opportunities could come from the installation of insulation and low carbon heating, alongside jobs in the development, manufacture and construction of renewable energy technologies.

Act now for warm homes: campaign to stop the establishment of a new fossil fuel industry - fracking for shale gas - and instead for the investment in renewable technology.

Find out more: friendsoftheearth.uk/fracking and 1010uk.org.

4. Land-use and agriculture

Put in place funding mechanisms to double the area of land forested, in order to take carbon pollution out of the atmosphere and provide space for nature.

We could have a greener UK that has double the forests for both people and wildlife to enjoy. We want agriculture that provides us with the healthy low meat and dairy diets we need while contributing to reducing levels of greenhouse gases, enhancing nature and supporting rural livelihoods.

Our green spaces could provide job opportunities through reforestation and rewilding projects. Parks and public spaces could be revitalised with increased investment and conservation programmes could provide jobs and opportunities for people of all generations to learn about protecting the natural world.

Act now for better land use and agriculture: campaign to make the government reduce pesticides and make the countryside a safer place for wildlife in its upcoming Agriculture Bill.

Find out more: friendsoftheearth.uk/latest/nature and friendsoftheearth.uk/food.

5. Infrastructure

Ensure the 2019 Spending Review, longer-term infrastructure plans, and other relevant financial mechanisms are focused on the need to deliver on climate change obligations.

Travel abroad by train and boat should be more affordable and attractive than flying, with flying rarely used. When necessary its use should be available to a broad set of people and not limited to the wealthier.

Development of sustainable transport infrastructure – for example high-speed rail – could create a significant number of jobs.

Act now for sustainable infrastructure: an expanded Heathrow airport will come with a carbon-emissions price tag that the whole planet will pay for – support the campaign to stop it.

Find out more: friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change.

Support local campaigns to oppose major unsustainable road building projects. Campaign for Better Transport have a campaigner's guide to stopping damaging roads being built:

bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs/roads_campaign_guide_third_edition_spring2016.pdf.

6. Justice and raising ambition

Request the Committee on Climate Change to provide advice on the changes needed to carbon budgets and long-term targets as a result of the Paris Agreement, recognizing the UK's relative wealth, and the need for fairness to poorer countries and future generations.

As of writing, the government has made this request and we await the Committee of Climate Change's advice. The government must make every effort to take just and urgent action on climate change that is commensurate to the scale of the challenge.

A report outlining how governments can pursue equity after Paris will be published in early December 2018 and available on civilsocietyreview.org.

Together, we can make it happen

The domestic solutions outlined above are truly transformative and give us the best chance to stop runaway climate change and protect people, wildlife and the planet. It may seem a big task but we know what people power and Friends of the Earth can achieve. We see that power every day in the phenomenal community campaigns powered by our local groups, our dynamic national campaigns that fight relentlessly to protect nature and stop the government from making climate-wrecking decisions, and we see it within our global alliance that makes sure climate justice is always on the agenda.

We need a national effort and ambition similar to the creation of the welfare state that followed the devastation of World War 2. In crisis, the people forced government to act to reconstruct Britain in a fairer way. This saw the rapid creation of the National Health Service, a massive council house building programme, expansion of social security, education and infrastructure investment.

The climate crisis we face requires an even greater and bolder response.

In the coming months Friends of the Earth will publish further details of high-profile campaigning activity. We will ensure that our local groups and activists are equipped with what is needed to campaign for maximum impact. Stay in touch with your regional staff contact and look out for upcoming events, training opportunities and campaigning resources.

References and further reading

¹ <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>

² <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/extreme-carbon-inequality>

Read more about the potential for job creation in a low carbon economy in the "One Million Climate Jobs" Report (2014). Available online: https://www.campaigncc.org/sites/data/files/Docs/one_million_climate_jobs_2014.pdf