

Press release: PM Theresa May: we will end UK contribution to climate change by 2050

The Prime Minister has today announced that the UK will eradicate its net contribution to climate change by 2050.

The statutory instrument to implement this will be laid in Parliament today, Wednesday 12 June. This will amend the Climate Change Act 2008.

Theresa May will also meet young science and engineering students today to discuss the ambitious new target, which is based on advice from independent experts: the Committee on Climate Change.

The UK already leads the world in tackling climate change, and Government commissioned this advice in October having recognised the need to go even further to limit its effects.

In its report, the Committee on Climate Change forecast significant benefits to public health and savings to the NHS from better air quality and less noise pollution, as well as improved biodiversity.

This legislation will mean that the UK is on track to become the first G7 country to legislate for net zero emissions, with other major economies expected to follow suit. But it is imperative that other major economies follow suit. For that reason, the UK will conduct a further assessment within 5 years to confirm that other countries are taking similarly ambitious action, multiplying the effect of the UK's lead and ensuring that our industries do not face unfair competition.

For the first time, young people will have the chance to shape our future climate policy through the Youth Steering Group. The Group, set up by DCMS and led by the British Youth Council, will advise Government on priorities for environmental action and give a view on progress to date against existing commitments on climate, waste and recycling, and biodiversity loss. They will start their review in July.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

As the first country to legislate for long-term climate targets, we can be truly proud of our record in tackling climate change. We have made huge progress in growing our economy and the jobs market while slashing emissions.

Now is the time to go further and faster to safeguard the environment for our children. This country led the world in innovation during the Industrial Revolution, and now we must lead the world to a cleaner, greener form of growth.

Standing by is not an option. Reaching net zero by 2050 is an ambitious target, but it is crucial that we achieve it to ensure we protect our planet for future generations.

Whilst it will be for future governments to determine the precise direction of future climate policy, the Committee on Climate Change acknowledge that we have laid strong foundations through our Clean Growth Strategy and taken action to tackle climate change across key sectors of the economy identified by the report.

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Greg Clark said:

We want to continue our global leadership and that's why we are introducing a legally binding net zero target to end the UK's contribution to global warming entirely by 2050. The report we commissioned from the Committee on Climate Change makes clear that we have laid the foundations to achieve a net zero emissions economy, and that it is necessary and feasible.

Almost 400,000 people are already employed in the low-carbon sector and its supply chains across the country. Through our modern Industrial Strategy we're investing in clean growth to ensure we reap the rewards and create two million high quality jobs by 2030.

The UK is already a centre for clean growth and innovation. Low carbon technology and clean energy contribute £44.5 billion to our economy every year. We are ending the sale of new diesel and petrol cars and vans through our world-leading Road to Zero Strategy, and protecting biodiversity and promoting sustainability through our 25 Year Environment Plan.

Businesses, academics and people across society have endorsed the advice from the Committee on Climate Change. Welcoming the announcement, Dame Carolyn Fairbairn DBE, CBI Director-General, said:

UK business stands squarely behind the Government's commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. This legislation is the right response to the global climate crisis, and firms are ready to play their part in combating it.

Climate leadership can drive UK competitiveness and secure long-term prosperity. This legislation must be followed by a commitment to long-term policies that support decarbonisation across the economy.

Some sectors will need clear pathways to enable investment in low-carbon technologies, and it is vital that there is cross-government coordination on the policies and regulation needed to deliver a clean future.

We will retain the ability to use international carbon credits. Using international credits within an appropriate monitoring, reporting and verification framework is the right thing to do for the planet, allowing the UK to maximise the value of each pound spent on climate change mitigation.

We will continue to work with our international partners to tackle climate change, including through our bid to host COP26.