

# UK to go further and faster to tackle climate change

- Ambitious new package of energy efficiency measures for businesses which could also save them £1 billion a year in energy bills by 2030
- bold plans to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport including automotive, freight and rail and stronger governance to drive further climate action across government
- comes as government introduces the new Environment Bill

The government has today (15 October 2019) set out how it will go further and faster to tackle climate change, in [response to recommendations from the Committee on Climate Change \(CCC\)](#). This comes 4 months after the UK became the first major economy to legislate for net zero emissions by 2050.

The government's official response to the CCC's recommendation includes plans to strengthen governance to galvanise the whole of government to do more to tackle climate change and a bold and ambitious plan to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport.

Today's response to the CCC sets out details of the wide-ranging action taken so far. Other new measures include:

- proposals to dramatically improve commercial buildings in the private rented sector, with businesses set to benefit by saving up to £1 billion per year in energy bills by 2030. This includes a [consultation on plans to improve the energy performance of rented commercial buildings](#). The proposal to set minimum energy efficiency standards at EPC band B by 2030 could reduce UK emissions by the equivalent of half a million homes – roughly the size of Birmingham
- a consultation in 2020 on introducing mandatory in-use energy performance ratings for business buildings. This will be a key step in helping businesses to understand and manage the amount of energy they use
- a consultation on [proposals to make it simpler for large-scale energy storage facilities to obtain planning permission](#)
- an endorsement of the recommendations of the Energy Data Taskforce, unlocking the potential of data sharing across the energy system to support decarbonisation and reduce consumer bills

Today, the new Environment Bill will also be introduced in Parliament. The Bill outlines ambitious proposals to strengthen the UK's standards of environmental protection post-Brexit with the establishment of a new public body – the Office for Environmental Protection which will also hold government and other public bodies to account on their environmental obligations, including on climate change.

Business and Energy Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

4 months ago the UK took the bold step of becoming the first country in the developed world to put into law our ambition to wipe out the UK's contribution to climate change by 2050, following the CCC's advice.

This builds on our long and proud track record of leadership – since 1990 we've cut our greenhouse gas emissions by 42% while growing our economy by more than two-thirds. More than half of our electricity currently comes from low carbon sources. And we will keep on going further and faster to ensure our action meets our ambition.

These new measures build on the UK's record of action. Since committing in law to end the UK's contribution to climate change entirely by 2050, the government has announced investment of around £2 billion in low carbon technologies to lead the race in developing solutions to tackle climate change from research and development in large-scale battery technology to speeding up the development of carbon capture capability.

Recognising the need to scale up efforts in the transport industry, the UK's first Transport Decarbonisation Plan has been announced today to bring together a bold and ambitious programme of coordinated action needed to end the UK's transport emissions by 2050.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

From driving our cars, to catching a train or taking a flight abroad, it is crucial that we ensure transport is as environmentally friendly as possible.

This is why, as well as agreeing to the CCC's recommendation on net zero by 2050, we have launched this ground-breaking plan to achieve net zero emissions across every single mode of transport.

We want to work with industry and communities around the country to develop this plan – to make our towns and cities better places to live, help to create new jobs, improve air quality and our health, and take urgent action on climate change.

Due to be complete next year, the first-of-a-kind plan will set out in detail what government, business and society will need to do to deliver the significant emissions reduction needed from all modes of transport. In particular it will consider how UK technology and innovation can be implemented to encourage major changes to the way people and goods move across the UK.

Earlier this month, the [government announced up to £1 billion](#) to develop and embed the next generation of cutting-edge automotive technologies. The funding will look to accelerate mass production of key technologies in the UK through major investments in the manufacturing of batteries including cells,

modules and packs as well as electric motors, power electronics and hydrogen fuel cells.

The new money will include research and development into new, advanced electric vehicle technologies, helping to super-charge the uptake of zero emission vehicles in the UK, building on the £1 billion R&D commitment to the [Advanced Propulsion Centre](#) and £274 million funding for the Faraday Battery Challenge.

Further detail on how the UK will make progress towards the 2050 net zero target is expected in the National Infrastructure Strategy this autumn.

1. Since legislating for net zero, the government has committed more than £2 billion to support decarbonisation in sectors across the economy from industry to transport:

- £390 million of investment in hydrogen and low carbon technology to [reduce emissions from industry](#), including steel – which accounts for 15% of industry emissions in the UK
- up to [£1 billion additional funding](#) to develop and embed the next generation of cutting-edge electric vehicle technologies
- £400 million of investment in new charging infrastructure for electric vehicles
- plans to use [new financing models](#) to roll out more new nuclear, including up to £18 million for the UK's first mini nuclear reactor to be operational in the early 2030s – creating 40,000 jobs at its peak and powering 750,000 homes
- £26 million of additional funding for carbon capture technology, including investment in the [UK's largest project to be operational by next year](#)
- £222 million [investment](#) in a visionary fusion reactor design programme
- plans to make it easier to [recycle oil and gas infrastructure for carbon capture](#), including some of the 20,000km of UK pipelines
- record low use of coal in the UK's energy system, with just 0.6% of the UK's electricity coming from coal between April and June
- our Green Finance Strategy, requiring publicly listed companies and large asset owners from 2021 to report on how climate change risk impacts on their activities by 2021
- £5 million to help the financial sector develop green financial products, including green mortgages
- a £10 million innovation fund to cut the cost of retrofitting old homes

2. The groundwork for the Transport Decarbonisation Plan will start immediately, with the department publishing a document setting out the challenge later this year. The Department for Transport has recently published strategies to reduce carbon emissions across transport, including the £1.5 billion [Road to Zero](#), [Maritime 2050](#) and the Clean Maritime Plan as well as the [Aviation 2050 green paper](#), and upcoming aviation strategy which will be published early next year. But with the move to net zero, there is a need to go further and faster to reduce emissions. The Transport Decarbonisation Plan will take a coordinated, cross-modal approach to deliver the transport sector's contribution to our decarbonisation targets.

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## French patrols doubled to tackle migrant crossings

The UK and France have agreed an enhanced action plan which will see patrols on French beaches doubled, as activity is stepped up to tackle migrants crossing the Channel in small boats.

Under an enhanced action plan, the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, and the French Interior Minister, Christophe Castaner, have agreed to redouble efforts to address the issue. The updated plan includes:

- doubling patrols and deploying new detection equipment to increase interceptions on French beaches
- action to intensify efforts to tackle criminal gangs through strengthened intelligence sharing
- engaging directly with migrants to discourage them from making the journey

Assets on the ground will be doubled to provide 24/7 cover of the beaches in northern France, ensuring more detections before boats are able to leave the shore, cutting the number of attempted crossings.

The new plan follows a meeting between the Home Secretary and the French Interior Minister on 29 August, at which they agreed tougher action was needed following the concerning rise in incidents over the summer months and agreed to draw up an enhanced plan.

The Home Secretary, Priti Patel said:

As Home Secretary, I have a duty to protect our borders and prevent the loss of life. That's why I am absolutely committed to doing everything in my power to stop these dangerous Channel crossings which are putting vulnerable lives at risk.

The plan we have agreed builds on the extensive joint work we are already doing with our French neighbours, and I am confident that it will lead to a considerable reduction in this illegal activity.

The French Interior Minister, Christophe Castaner, said:

This addendum clearly marks a new and very concrete level of commitment of the United Kingdom to tackle irregular crossings through the Channel.

Eradicating this phenomenon should allow us to save lives as well

as reduce the migratory pressure in Northern France.

The enhanced plan came into force on Saturday 28 September and the ultimate goal of both Ministers is for attempts to cross the Channel in small boat to be an infrequent phenomenon by Spring 2020.

To supplement increased resources on the ground, the UK and France are going to step up intelligence gathering and sharing on criminal gangs, including through UK intelligence sources being deployed to France.

There will also be greater engagement directly with migrants, to change their behaviour and deter them from making the journey to the UK. This will be based on the successful Operation Focal, which sees UK and French authorities directly countering the misinformation put forward by criminal gangs.

Finally, action will be taken to increase returns and prevent people who have already made the journey and been returned to Europe from making the journey again, through improved capturing and sharing of data.

The boosted plan follows on from the Joint Action Plan agreed by the former Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, and Christophe Castaner in January.

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## [Melissa Tatton appointed as new Tax Assurance Commissioner](#)

Melissa Tatton has today (15 October 2019) been appointed as HMRC's Tax Assurance Commissioner, overseeing the assurance and dispute governance arrangements that allow Parliament and the public to be confident that HMRC secures the right tax under the law when resolving tax disputes.

Chief Executive of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), an executive agency of HMRC, Melissa takes over from Jim Harra following his appointment as HMRC interim Chief Executive.

She also becomes chair of the Professional Standards Committee and head of the tax profession.

Melissa, who retains her VOA responsibilities, does not directly engage with taxpayers to discuss their specific tax liabilities, nor is she responsible for the HMRC operational teams that manage taxpayers' compliance.

### **Biography**

Melissa joined the Inland Revenue as a graduate tax inspector and has forged a successful career as a tax leader across a wide range of roles.

She took up her current post as Chief Executive of the Valuation Office Agency in September 2017, and was previously HMRC Director for Individuals and Small Business Compliance; Director, Large Business Service and Deputy Director, Business International.

## **The Tax Assurance Commissioner**

The Tax Assurance Commissioner role was introduced in 2012 to strengthen HMRC's governance and assurance of tax disputes.

It provides assurance to Parliament and the public that HMRC handles civil tax disputes in accordance with the law and its litigation and settlement strategy – avoiding unnecessary disputes, conducting them in a non-confrontational, collaborative and transparent way and resolving them to collect the tax that is due under the law without unnecessary delay.

The Tax Assurance Commissioner chairs a panel of 3 HMRC Commissioners who make decisions in the largest and most sensitive cases as well as a sample of smaller cases.

The role also oversees HMRC's tax settlement assurance programme to ensure that the department monitors and continuously improves its management of tax disputes.

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## **Turkey military action in Syria: Urgent Question opening statement**

On 9 October, following the US announcement that it would withdraw its troops from the region, Turkey launched a military operation in north east Syria. Turkish troops have pushed into northern Syrian towns and villages, clashing with the Kurdish fighters over a stretch of now 125 miles. The UN estimates that at least 160,000 people have been displaced in less than a week.

From the outset, the UK Government has warned Turkey against taking this military action. And as we feared it has seriously undermined the stability and the security of the region. It risks worsening the humanitarian crisis and increasing the suffering of millions of refugees. And it also undermines the international effort that should be focused on defeating Daesh.

I can tell the house, Mr Speaker, on Thursday, 10 October, I spoke to Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu and expressed the UK's grave concerns. On Saturday, 12 October, the Prime Minister spoke to President Erdogan to reinforce those concerns and urge restraint. I also addressed the issue at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on Saturday. And yesterday, the EU released a statement which we joined, condemning Turkey's unilateral military action, and calling on it to withdraw its forces.

The UK Government takes its arms export control responsibilities very seriously and in this case of course we will keep our defence exports to Turkey under very careful and continual review. And I can tell the house that no further export licences to Turkey for items which might be used in military operations in Syria will be granted while we conduct that review.

And yesterday, the honourable members will know the US signed an executive order to impose limited sanctions on Turkey, including against senior members of Turkey's government. The EU considered this, and on balance, decided against sanctions at this stage. However, we will keep the position under careful review.

It is only right, Mr Speaker, as we condemn this military intervention, that we also recognise some of the legitimate concerns that Turkey has – in relation to the 3.6 million refugees that it has taken from Syria. And its concerns around the threat to its security from the PKK at its southern border with Syria.

For decades, Turkey has been a staunch ally in NATO – one of the largest contributors of military personnel. But with close partners, Mr Speaker, we must at times be candid and clear. This is not the action we expected from an ally. It is reckless, it is counterproductive, and it plays straight into the hands of Russia and indeed the Assad regime.

So the UK Government calls on Turkey to exercise maximum restraint and to bring an end to the unilateral military action. I commend this statement to the house

[Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab – Urgent Question on Turkey & Syria](#)

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## [New chair for Government Property Agency appointed](#)

- Government Property Agency appoints Pat Ritchie, Chief Executive at Newcastle City Council, as its new Chair
- Ms Ritchie will be charged with realising GPA's ambitious target of delivering £1.4bn savings over the next decade
- Launched in 2018, the GPA manages a property portfolio valued at £195m

The government has today announced the appointment of Pat Ritchie for a four-

year term as the new Chair of the Government Property Agency (GPA). The appointment has been made with the approval of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Secretary.

The GPA acts as the government's landlord, providing strategic advice on its property estate. Launched in 2018 and managing property assets for over 60 departments and public sector bodies, it has been tasked with delivering savings worth £1.4bn to the public purse over the next 10 years.

Ms Ritchie will take up the position alongside her role as Chief Executive at Newcastle City Council where she has overseen successful regeneration projects in the north-east.

As chair of the GPA, she will drive efficiency and modernisation across a government estate spanning 210,000m<sup>2</sup> and valued at £195m, taking the reins from current Chair Liz Peace on 1 January 2020.

**On her new role, Pat Ritchie said:**

The GPA is having a real impact already by implementing greater commercial thinking to government property. Through revitalising and modernising the public estate we can help drive regeneration and economic growth.

I am looking forward to joining the GPA as Chair in the new year and would like to thank Liz Peace for her work in establishing the agency. Building on Liz's legacy, I will bring my own background, experience and knowledge to help continue the GPA's mission and create a brilliant Civil Service.

**Minister for Implementation Simon Hart said:**

Pat's knowledge and expertise make her the ideal person to realise the GPA's ambitious agenda.

Through this work we can help spread growth around the UK and free up more money to spend on people's priorities, like schools, the NHS and the police.

A key pillar of Ms Ritchie's new brief will be the Government Hubs Programme. Hubs bring together different departments under one roof – moving civil servants to inner-city sites across the UK located near to transport links, amenities and shops, and will boost the economy through savings, inner-city regeneration and increasing trade for local businesses.

**Mike Parsons, Director General of the Office of Government Property, said:**

I am delighted to welcome Pat to the GPA Board. I am confident that her knowledge and experience will greatly benefit GPA in its



important work in managing the property portfolio and ensure civil servants have fit for purpose accommodation that supports smarter working and promotes productivity.

**GPA Chief Executive, Steven Boyd, said:**

This is an exciting time for the GPA and a great moment for Pat to join us as we move into the second phase of our Hubs Programme and continue to grow our portfolio of government assets. Pat brings a wealth of knowledge and experience, and I am looking forward to working with her.

I would also like, on behalf of everyone at GPA, to thank Liz Peace for her contribution as Chair. Under Liz's leadership and guidance, GPA has set a clear strategy and direction of travel, and we look forward to seeing the momentum that we are beginning to build continue when Pat joins us in January.