

THE BIG CLIMATE CONNECTION: WHAT ARE WE ASKING FOR? A BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUES

ABOUT THIS BRIEFING

This briefing is to provide background information on Stop Climate Chaos policy demands. In order to effectively influence our MPs, not all of these policies will be prioritised for The Big Climate Connection on November 5 and 6. Further information on the specific policy asks for the lobby will be sent closer to the time.

“Climate Change is the greatest global health threat of the 21st century.”

The UCL Lancet Commission on Climate Change, 2009

Climate change is a major threat to the world’s ecosystems upon which we all depend. But **climate change is not just an environmental issue.**

In the UK, extreme weather events **directly affect the health of the most vulnerable in society:** the elderly, young children, those living in poverty, and those already suffering health problems (e.g. respiratory problems, cancers). These events will become more frequent with climate change.

In developing countries the **impacts on ordinary people** are even greater due to greater levels of poverty, more subsistence farming which leads to greater exposure to extreme weather events, much reduced capacity to respond to and rebound from extreme weather events, and because many live in more marginal lands where effects are already being felt.

Stop Climate Chaos is a coalition of organisations from environment and development charities to unions, faith, community, health and women’s groups working together to campaign for political and policy changes on climate change. One of the most important shared values that drives much of our work as a coalition is that **the most vulnerable in society**, both here in the UK and overseas, must be protected as much as possible from climate change through limiting future climate change and helping them adapt to the climate change that is already happening.

This is why we demand that the UK acts fair and fast, delivers on its promises, and gives high priority to protecting the poorest across the globe, including those in the UK.

Taking **action on climate change can also be a good news story:** creating new jobs, new industries, providing resilience to increasing oil prices, eradicating the fuel poverty that blights millions of people's lives, reducing health impacts on the most vulnerable and in the UK improving energy security.

LEADERSHIP THROUGH DOING IN THE UK

The world needs a **global solution to the climate change problem:** a solution that is best delivered by a fair, ambitious and binding agreement under the United Nations. The UN Climate Change negotiations in Copenhagen held in December 2009 failed to deliver an international plan of action to prevent runaway climate change or deal with its effects.

The UK could and should deliver real leadership. As the **birth-place of the industrial revolution** we kick-started the fossil fuel age, and along with other developed countries we have released the most greenhouse gases that have led to climate change happening.

The UK is showing some leadership. It has the **world's first Climate Change Act** setting emissions reduction targets up to 2050. This was a result of campaigning by the Stop Climate Chaos coalition and its supporters, which through grassroots activism and national lobbying secured support for the new law from the vast majority of MPs across all political parties. The Government now needs to **translate this Act into action** by putting in place the policies that will deliver the emission cuts. By doing so it will show internationally that reducing emissions is possible at the same time as creating a stronger economy and protecting the most vulnerable in society.

The new **coalition UK Government has promised to be the greenest yet.** Delivery on the emissions reductions demanded by the Climate Change Act is a large part of turning this rhetoric into action. There are a large number of policy changes required to deliver on this at a local, devolved nation and UK level. In coming months the Stop Climate Chaos coalition is prioritising action in two areas: fossil fuel electricity production and energy efficiency in homes. Individual member groups of the coalition are pushing alone or with others for critical policy changes in other areas, for example on transport, local council action, and renewable power.

FOSSIL FUEL POWER GENERATION

The UK has a **very poor record on renewable power**. Our abundant sources of coal and gas have led to successive governments neglecting more sustainable power and instead setting economic and regulatory frameworks to favour coal and gas. Coal-fired electricity generation is particularly inefficient and produces vast amounts of carbon dioxide for relatively little electricity. Gas-fired power stations are more efficient but still big carbon polluters. As a result of the bias in favour of dirty fuels the **power sector is responsible for around a third of the UK's emissions**.

The Committee on Climate Change, an advisory body set-up to identify policy changes needed to deliver the Climate Change Act, has said that emissions from this sector need to reduce by at least 50 per cent by 2020 and that by 2030s by more than 80 per cent. Since power stations built now will last decades it is obvious that coal-fired power stations shouldn't be built, at least not without a requirement for them to capture the carbon pollution and store it (which is so far untested on a large-scale).

- Stop Climate Chaos is calling for an **Emissions Performance Standard** to be set so that emissions from individual power stations do not exceed 350g/CO₂ per KWhr by 2020 (compared to 800–900 at present), with this standard getting tougher over time.

HOMES

Our **homes are responsible for about a third of the UK's emissions**. Because of poor insulation around £1 of every £4 spent on heating in many UK homes is wasted. Higher fuel bills have also led the number of households in fuel poverty to grow from 1.2 million in 2004 to 4.6 million 2010 and the annual cost to the NHS of treating winter related disease due to cold private housing is almost £1 billion. A recent study showed that The NHS saved 42 pence out of every £1 invested in keeping homes warm. It clearly makes sense to insulate our homes to a much higher standard, cutting pollution, saving lives, eradicating fuel poverty and cutting NHS costs. And doing this would create new jobs – a programme to bring the homes of the fuel poor alone up to a high standard would sustain over 35,000 jobs.

- The Stop Climate Chaos coalition is calling for a **minimum energy efficiency standard** to be set for private rented houses to eradicate the houses in worst condition (band F & G houses) by 2015, and a commitment to ensure that all houses meet at least band D standard by 2020. At least 7 million houses must have had substantial refurbishment to reduce emissions from them by 60 per cent by 2020.

FINANCE

Making our energy supply less polluting and insulating Britain's housing stock will take money. The Stop Climate Chaos coalition is supporting the **formation of a new Green Investment Bank** to fund the transition to a low carbon, prosperous, and healthy economy.

- Stop Climate Chaos is **calling for the Green Investment Bank (GIB)** to be established with the £10 billion capital needed to deliver the rapid transition to a low-carbon economy and bring in the private investment required. The Green New Deal Group calculates that £10 billion of green investment would re-skill 1.5 million people, bring 120,000 people back into the workforce and increase the earnings of those on low incomes by more than £15 billion.

INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH DOING

Domestic action on climate change alone is not enough. Together with other developed countries the UK is responsible for the bulk of climate change, through its emissions over the last hundred years. Even today our emissions per person still far exceed those of people living in Africa, India and China. This means that the UK has a moral duty, as well as a legal duty under the UN Climate Convention, to provide support to developing countries. By doing so, we can help to create a safer, fairer and more secure world for all of us and ensure that millions of people already living in poverty are not further damaged and disadvantaged by the impacts of climate change.

The Stop Climate Chaos Coalition is calling for the UK Government to:

- Pursue a **legally binding global deal** that delivers the scale and speed of emissions cuts necessary to keep average global temperature rises as far below 2 degrees as possible. Such a deal must be fair and equitable, recognising each country's historical responsibilities, current emissions and developmental needs, and must protect the world's ecosystems. This must include agreed Kyoto Protocol binding targets for after 2012, when the current targets run out.
- Work within the EU to immediately and unconditionally secure agreement for a **30 per cent emission cut by 2020 in the EU**, as a path towards the 40 per cent that is ultimately needed. To encourage this, the UK Government should commit itself to at least 40 per cent cuts by 2020, which is our share of an EU-wide 30 per cent cut.

- In the period up to 2012, deliver its **fair share of the ‘fast start finance’** (\$30 billion over the next three years) that was agreed at the Copenhagen conference. This money should be new and on top of existing aid targets. It must be delivered working in partnership with developing countries and locally affected people via transparent democratically accountable channels.
- Commit to provide **our fair share of the money that poor countries need** to adapt to climate change and to help them follow a low carbon development path (at least \$200 billion by 2020). The EU share of this climate finance is at least €53 billion per year by 2020, and the UK must commit to pay its fair share. This funding must be on top of the funds required to meet the existing internationally agreed aid target for donor countries (0.7 per cent of GDP) and additional to private sector investment and the carbon markets.
- Support the creation of **new sources of revenue to deliver this climate finance**. This can include taxing pollution, for example making the international aviation and shipping industries pay a fair share of tax on fuel, stopping fossil fuel subsidies, or raising money from international finance transactions as proposed by the Robin Hood Tax Alliance. Stemming tax avoidance by companies and the super-rich is also another potentially huge source of revenue.
- Provide sufficient, reliable **funding to tackle deforestation and forest degradation**. Any new agreement on forests and climate should involve all countries with forest issues, protect the rights and livelihoods of indigenous people and local communities, and protect and restore biodiversity.

In doing so the UK must work in partnership with a wide range of developing countries to find a sustainable and fair route forwards.

Time is short. The longer it takes to get a strong and fair international agreement the more it will cost to address climate change, the more our climate will change, the more ecosystems will be destroyed or damaged, and the more people, especially the most vulnerable, will suffer.