Information

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Providing support for County Councillors

for County Councillors

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| Date: | 8th July 2022 |

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| To: | All County Councillors |

# Climate Change Committee (CCC):

# 2022 Progress report to Parliament

# On the 29th June, the Climate Change Committee published its Annual Assessment of UK progress towards reducing emissions

**1. Who are the CCC and what is their function?**

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) is an independent, statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008. The CCC is Chaired by Lord Deben and its Leadership comprises a group of eminent academics, sector experts and climate specialists.

The purpose of the CCC is to advise the UK and devolved governments on emissions targets and to report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

The CCC’s advice influences and is directly reflected in UK-wide legislation and policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and actions required to prepare and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Committee’s recommendations have also helped to shape climate change and environmental legislation and policy in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. As an expert technical advisory body, the Committee’s analysis also informs debate about the challenges and opportunities of climate change.

**2. What is the Annual Progress report?**

The statutory Progress Report to Parliament provides a comprehensive overview of the UK Government’s progress to date in reducing greenhouse gas emissions which are contributing to global climate change. This is a pivotal point in the UK’s journey to Net Zero. The UK is one of the few countries with emissions targets in line with the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement to keep global emissions to below a 1.5°C temperature rise.

The 2022 600 page Progress Report, along with various detailed supporting document can be found at the link below; [2022 Progress Report to Parliament - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk)](https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/2022-progress-report-to-parliament/)

This latest report is also accompanied by a new [Monitoring Framework](https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/ccc-monitoring-framework) which details the CCC’s updated approach to tracking real-world progress through a host of new indicators.

**3. Emission Reductions**

The report highlights UK emissions are now almost half (47%) their 1990 levels. Emissions rose 4% in 2021 as the economy began to recover from COVID-19 but were still 10% below 2019 levels. Further progress must be led by Government policies with clear direction, credible delivery mechanisms and suitable incentives to shape private sector action. In no sector of the economy is this yet complete.

**4. Key messages from the 2022 Progress Report**

As the UK prepares for a winter of extraordinary fuel bills, the Government has recommitted to Net Zero. The urgency of moving away from fossil fuels, securing energy supplies and cutting carbon emissions has never been clearer but the Climate Change Committee (CCC) finds major failures in delivery programmes towards the achievement of the UK’s climate goals.

The CCC has previously applauded the Government for setting ambitious targets and launching a new Net Zero Strategy. Policies are now in place for most sectors of the economy, but a thorough review of progress finds scant evidence of delivery against these headline goals so far. There are some bright spots of progress, but in most areas the likelihood of under-delivery is high.

The key messages are:

* **The UK Government now has a solid Net Zero strategy in place**, but important policy gaps remain.
* **Tangible progress is lagging the policy ambition.** With an emissions path set for the UK and the Net Zero Strategy published, greater emphasis and focus must be placed on delivery.
* **Successful delivery of changes on the ground requires active management of delivery risks.**Whilst some policies may be more successful than expected, not all policies will deliver. These risks cannot credibly be tackled with an even greater reliance on greenhouse gas removal technologies. The Government should develop contingency plans, such as encouraging reduced consumer demand for high-carbon activities (e.g., through healthier diets, or curbs to growth in demand for flights).
* **Action to address the rising cost of living should be aligned with Net Zero.** There remains an urgent need for equivalent action to reduce demand for fossil fuels to reduce emissions and limit energy bills.
* **There has been slow progress on the cross-cutting enablers of progress.** The Net Zero Strategy contains warm words on the wider enablers of the transition, but little progress.
  + There is no public engagement strategy three years after the Net Zero target was signed into law;
  + HM Treasury has yet to set out how the full range of costs and benefits of the transition will be shared – it must urgently review its tax strategy to support the Net Zero transition;
  + comprehensive reform of planning legislation to reflect the UK’s international and national commitments to Net Zero is required;
  + we still await the urgently needed Future Homes Strategy. Bottlenecks, such as skills gaps and planning consents for infrastructure, should be anticipated and tackled early.
* **The UK must build on a successful COP26.**The UK presidency of the UN COP26 climate summit in Glasgow last November successfully strengthened long-term global ambition and introduced new mechanisms to support delivery. It should prioritise making those new mechanisms work in practice and strengthening global 2030 ambition, while preparing for a focus on climate finance and adaptation at COP27 in 2022 and COP28 in 2023.

The report also considered main areas of progress citing that the areas of strongest progress are backed and led by well-designed Government policy:

* **Deployment of renewable electricity.** Emissions from electricity generation have fallen by nearly 70% in the last decade. With offshore wind, business has shown that given the right market conditions and support it can cut costs dramatically and deploy low-carbon solutions rapidly.
* **Electric cars** are being adopted in greater numbers each year. Their rise is already ahead of CCC and Government growth projections, showing that consumers and households are willing to adopt low-carbon options when offered a cost-effective, good quality product.

In other areas, low-carbon options remain in their infancy. Policy has not yet begun to guide the promised private sector action:

* **Energy efficiency in homes.** Given soaring energy bills, there is a shocking gap in policy for better insulated homes. Government promised significant public spending in 2019 and committed to new policies last year, neither has yet occurred. The UK continues to have some of the leakiest homes in Europe and installations of insulation remain at rock bottom – the average annual energy bill for UK households is around £40 higher than if insulation rates from pre-2012 had continued for the last decade.
* **Agriculture and land use** have the weakest policies in the CCC’s assessment, despite being vital to delivering Net Zero and the Government’s other goals on food security and biodiversity.
* Policy shortfalls in the **surface transport sector** are on the demand side. The decarbonisation pathway should not be all about replacing fossil-fuelled vehicles with electric ones, it also offers an important opportunity to change the way people view mobility.

**5. Climate Conversations and the CCC Visit to Somerset**

During spring 2022, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) held a series of climate conversations with a limited number of Councils and met with senior council leaders, mayors and officers to discuss the action they are taking locally to deliver Net Zero and improved climate resilience.

During the visits, the CCC also engaged with climate partnerships, businesses, community groups and residents through meetings and workshops to understand the tangible ‘on the ground’ activities, opportunities and barriers they face.

Somerset County Council was selected to participate in recognition of having a Climate Emergency Strategy which had been adopted countywide and the success in the recent Climate UK Scorecard where we were scored as the best ‘top tier’ local authority in the country for our comprehensive Strategy and approach to tackling the climate emergency.

Several members of the CCC, attended the event held at the Somerset County Cricket Ground on 17th March along with key officers from the County Council, Business and Community leaders and Partner organisations. The discussions reflected the challenges and opportunities of delivering ‘net zero’ in a large rural county and the need for clear policies and reliable funding from central government to enable us to deliver on our ambitions.

The key findings from the UK Climate Conversation detailed below has informed the 2022 report and will help to inform the CCC’s advice to Government and its future work.

* The visits, meetings and conversations reinforced the CCC’s opinion that **local authorities have a vital role to play in leveraging all their powers, assets and influence to deliver Net Zero and climate adaptation** in the coming years.
* The CCC recognises the **importance of the many community-based initiatives** which generate the success stories, inspiration and positivity that can start and maintain support for UK climate action.
* Yet these actions are all **different and uncoordinated, and this is not just because different places have different contexts.**National strategies do not provide for a devolved set of climate responsibilities and there is generally no framework to manage delivery roles between national, regional and local levels of Government.
* **Efforts need to be focused on the key emissions sectors** to tackle heating, new buildings, buildings retrofit and deliver modal shift and decarbonised transport.
* **National, regional and local coordination is urgently needed** to ensure that local action aggregates to deliver Net Zero emissions and improved resilience in a coherent way.

The full Climate Conversations report is available here; [Climate Conversation: Delivering a Net Zero, Climate Resilient UK (Louise Marix Evans) - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk)](https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/climate-conversation-delivering-a-net-zero-climate-resilient-uk-louise-marix-evans/)

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