



Policy Position:

# CLIMATE CHANGE

June 2019

# ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

## POLICY POSITION: CLIMATE CHANGE KEY MESSAGES

- Reports published recently by the United Nations (UN), and by the UK's Committee on Climate Change (CCC), together with a big increase in public demonstrations of concern, have brought a new urgency to the need to take further action at all levels to tackle climate change.
- Following the declaration of a 'climate emergency' by many local authorities, in May 2019 the UK Parliament declared a nationwide environment and climate emergency.
- With the UK bidding to host the annual UN Conference of the Parties in November 2020 (COP 26), we have a unique opportunity to ensure that local government contributes to international efforts to tackle climate change. Through ADEPT, Place Directors will play a leading role in galvanising the voice of local government.
- Councils understand climate change risks and impacts in their areas. They are uniquely well-placed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings, transport and waste, which together account for 40% of all emissions.
- Councils have important roles to play in ensuring effective adaptation in their areas by providing local leadership, adapting the services they deliver, and working collaboratively with others across the built environment, business and industry, infrastructure, natural capital, public health, and community resilience.
- The role of the Government in providing clear and ambitious cross-departmental leadership at a national level is crucial. Local actions need national support and resourcing. The forthcoming Environment Bill is the vital opportunity to demonstrate this leadership and strengthen UK law to tackle climate change more robustly.
- ADEPT welcomes the environmental principles set out in the draft Environment Bill and supports the proposal for an Office of Environmental Protection (OEP). It is essential that the OEP is fully independent of the Government and has significant powers to enforce compliance. We also believe that climate change should be within the remit of the OEP.
- The CCC has highlighted the need for a step change in ambition in order to deliver emissions reduction targets. ADEPT fully supports the Prime Minister's move in June 2019 to put a 2050 net zero emissions target for all greenhouse gases before Parliament, to amend and strengthen the Climate Change Act and to give the target statutory effect.
- Climate change causes ill health – including mental health impacts – through poor air quality, and extreme weather events such as heat waves, storms and floods. This impacts unequally, with extreme weather having disproportionate effects on older people, those on low incomes and on other vulnerable groups.
- Conversely, there are multiple health benefits to be gained from the transition to a zero-carbon economy, improving both physical and mental health.

## What ADEPT will do

- We have made climate change and the environment one of ADEPT's three strategic priorities. We are establishing a climate change programme (of which this policy statement is one element). We are discussing with our membership how this will be delivered on the ground. We intend to develop a further policy statement on clean growth and improving air quality.
- As the UK prepares for COP 26 in November 2020, we will work with sector partners, particularly the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel (LAAP), to galvanise the work of councils collectively and ensure our voice is heard. This is a unique opportunity to ensure that local government contributes to focussing national and international efforts to tackle climate change.
- We will support councils to put the climate crisis at the heart of their work by providing local leadership, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from their own estates and operations, and rolling out local decarbonisation initiatives. We will share innovation and good practice in adaptation, including the publication with the LAAP of a guide on preparing for the impacts of climate change – *Preparing for a changing climate: good practice guidance for Local Government* (June 2019).
- We will engage with our private sector corporate partners and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to ensure that plans for economic growth and improved productivity reflect the need to tackle climate change. ADEPT's corporate partners' seminar in March 2019, and conference in June 2019, are part of this work. Local Industrial Strategies must promote clean growth and explicitly contribute to climate change mitigation, resilience, and adaptation. We will focus on how all parts of the supply chain can contribute. We will work with partners to commission any further research and to determine how to maximise the impact of our work.
- We will make the case for resilient and adaptive assets and infrastructure, to reduce carbon emissions and withstand the effects of extreme weather events. Homes and buildings must be designed to the highest standards to minimise their impact and reduce the need for costly retro-fitting in future. Transport, utilities and digital infrastructure must be designed and maintained with these objectives given priority.
- We will lobby the Government to ask that its decisions on strategic national infrastructure for energy and transport (e.g. airport expansion, HS2) adequately reflect the priority to tackle climate change. Public policies including planning must encourage reduced car use and more active travel, adequate infrastructure for low carbon forms of transport, and clean energy generation from a wide range of technologies including on-shore wind.
- We will continue to work closely with the LAAP as the forum for dialogue between central and local government on climate change adaptation, in line with the Memorandum of Understanding between us.



- We will work with government departments and agencies, and were involved with the launch of the Environment Agency's (EA) draft Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy in May 2019. ADEPT welcomes the EA's draft strategy, particularly the focus on developing climate resilient places and future-proofing infrastructure. We will work with the EA and others to build the expertise, partnerships and engagement needed to plan much further into the future.
- In June 2019 ADEPT is launching its "50 for 30" initiative, a call for 50 climate change case studies demonstrating rapid transition to 2030. These case studies will demonstrate how councils are driving the rapid transition to a climate-ready future, using new technologies, materials, and communications. They will describe the direct and indirect benefits such as improved air quality, and physical and mental wellbeing. We will validate the case studies through an independent panel with invited representatives from Defra, the EA, the health and academic sectors, and corporate partners.
- We will work with public health leaders locally and nationally, including the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH), the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC), and Public Health England (PHE), to better understand the health impacts of climate change. We will work together on developing co-ordinated plans for extreme weather events. Older people and other vulnerable groups need extra support when these happen. There is a need for a whole system approach – collaboration between councils and partners, but also within councils so that different professions and services are working together towards common goals. We have involved the ADPH and UKHACC in our early discussions with corporate partners about what particular aspects of climate change local government should be focussing on.

## Key asks of the Government and others

In light of the most recent evidence of climate change – including the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, the UK's Climate Projections 2018 (UKCP18), and the CCC's review of carbon budgets – growing public concern, and Parliament's declaration of an environment and climate emergency, the Government must provide clear and ambitious leadership. It must take urgent actions at a number of levels to enable local authorities and others to put the climate crisis at the heart of their work. There must be:

1. a coherent policy framework,
2. effective guidance and support for local government, and
3. requirements for other sectors to make climate change their first priority.

### 1. Government policy

The Government must provide a coherent policy framework and robust regulatory regime to drive investment in decarbonisation and build clean growth in the UK. **ADEPT fully supports the Prime Minister's move in June 2019 to put a 2050 net zero emissions target for all greenhouse gases before Parliament, to amend and strengthen the Climate Change Act and to give the target statutory effect.** Achieving a net zero target by the middle of the century is in line with the UK's commitment under the Paris Agreement, and reflects growing public concern.

#### ADEPT calls on the Government to:

- Ensure that the net zero target applies to all sectors of the economy (including aviation and shipping) and should be met through the UK's own achievements rather than relying on international carbon credits, in line with the CCC's recommendations.
- Incorporate the net zero target as a principle in the Environment Bill, include climate change within the remit of the proposed OEP, and review the role of the CCC to ensure that responsibilities are clearly defined and understood.
- Ensure that all new legislation meets the need for a step change in action to reduce carbon emissions, protect the environment and prepare for the impact of climate change.

- Ensure that its own investment in and operation of strategic transport, energy and waste infrastructure adequately reflects climate change demands, as recommended by the National Infrastructure Commission in its first national infrastructure assessment (July 2018). Climate change adaptation and resilience should be embedded in the Green Book and Cost Benefit Analysis processes.
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to reflect viability defined more broadly not just as profitability for developers but longer-term benefits of climate change resilience, and prevent the cost of land being used as justification for non-compliance with policies; national planning policies should remove restrictions for on-shore wind.
- Bring forward the commitment to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles to 2030.
- Require all new homes and commercial buildings to be carbon net zero by 2025, using renewable energy, high insulation and low water use. Design standards and building regulations to prioritise energy efficiency, renewables and climate change resilience.

## 2. Support and resources for local government

There are a number of broad areas where the Government must provide the framework and resources to enable local authorities to put climate change at the heart of their work.

### **ADEPT calls on the Government to:**

- Place new duties on councils to provide local leadership in reducing all carbon emissions locally, and to report on their progress in tackling climate change across all of their services and responsibilities.
- Provide the extra resources needed to unlock councils' local leadership role around rapid decarbonisation, and to reduce emissions from their own estates and operations.
- Strengthen the planning process by urgently updating the NPPF and associated guidance to prioritise emissions reduction, set ambitious energy efficiency standards, mandate biodiversity net gain etc.
- Require local planning authorities (LPAs) to prioritise the need for climate change resilience in Local Plans. The Government should resource LPAs to employ specialist officers to ensure they have the climate change advice and expertise they need. The new Environment Act should require councils in two-tier areas to collaborate so that their roles as transport, public health, planning and environmental health authorities are aligned.
- In relation to housing, refocus existing funding to deliver energy efficiency improvements, reduce emissions, and tackle fuel poverty. The Government should provide resources for, and raise awareness of, ambitious retrofitting measures to deal with climate risks such as over-heating and flooding.



- Review Local Transport Planning guidance to prioritise decarbonisation of transport, provide extra funding for councils to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and provide tax incentives to encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking.

**Adept has drawn up an initial list of specific proposals to discuss with the Government and the LGA through the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) processes.**

### 3. Requirements for other sectors

The Government has set out its ambition for a low carbon, high productivity economy in its Industrial Strategy and Clean Growth Strategy. It must now send clear messages to business and other organisations about the urgent need for action on climate change.

**ADEPT believes that:**

- LEPs must be required to reflect the need for urgent action to deliver mitigation and adaptation across the country – at the same time as increasing productivity – in the Local Industrial Strategies now being developed, and in projects delivered through the Local Growth Fund.
- Public agencies such as Highways England, National Rail, Subnational Transport Boards and port authorities must also be required to prioritise climate change, deliver emissions reductions and adaptation across the country in their planning, investment decisions and operations.
- Businesses should be incentivised – and where appropriate, required – to prioritise climate change resilience in their planning, operations and reporting, including through their supply chains.
- The Government should send clear signals to the market about its increased ambitions to bring forward the ban on new petrol and diesel vehicles, and to decarbonise new buildings (see above).
- Business organisations such as the CBI, Institute of Directors, Chambers of Commerce, and Federation of Small Businesses should work in partnership with Government to help communicate the urgent need for action on climate change.
- Professional bodies working in the built environment and infrastructure sectors should prioritise climate change awareness and skills in their training and capacity-building. For instance, the LAAP is looking to work with the Royal Town and Planning Institute. The Government should use the second National Adaptation Programme to promote more holistic approaches to climate resilience within the built environment sector.
- Local Natural Capital Plans must recognise the benefits of green and blue infrastructure in terms of climate change adaptation for communities.



## Background

### International

The main international treaty on tackling climate change is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), agreed in 1992. The Paris Agreement adopted by all UNFCCC Parties in December 2015 is the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate agreement. The UNFCCC's top decision-making body is the annual COP. COP26 in November 2020 is likely to be a critical summit, marking both the full adoption of the Paris Agreement and the date by which countries are expected to come forward with strengthened national action plans. It will also come just weeks after the next US Presidential election.

The UK Government is bidding to host COP26 to showcase the UK's track record of cutting emissions by over 40% since 1990, and its ambition to become a global leader in clean growth once we have left the European Union (EU). Hosting COP26 would provide a boost to securing tougher emissions reductions targets and accelerating decarbonisation efforts through the 2020s.

In October 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The report projects that global average warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052. Given that the planet is currently heading for 3-4°C warming, keeping to 1.5°C will require a radical shift across energy, transport, industry, agriculture and other sectors to reduce emissions, unprecedented in history for its speed.

### National

The Climate Change Act (CCA) 2008 put in place a policy framework to promote adaptation action in the UK. The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) is a five-yearly assessment of the major risks and opportunities from climate change to the UK, published in 2012 and 2017.

The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) is an independent, statutory body established under the CCA to advise the Government on emissions targets and report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for climate change. The Adaptation Sub-Committee (ASC) of the CCC has a duty to advise the Government on the preparation of the CCRA, and to prepare a National Adaptation Programme (NAP) to address the main risks. The second NAP was published in 2018 and sets out the actions that the Government, local government, and others will take to address the priority risks posed by a changing climate.

The UK climate projections, UKCP18, provided updated observations and climate change projections to 2100. By the end of the century, all areas in the UK are projected to be significantly warmer. Hotter, drier summers with lower river flows are expected to become more common. Rainfall patterns will become more varied, and winters will become wetter. Sea levels will continue to rise, particularly in the south, and this will contribute to extreme coastal water events.

In the Clean Growth Strategy, the Government introduced a voluntary target for the public sector, the Emissions Reduction Pledge, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2020/21, compared to a 2009/10 baseline.

The 25 Year Environment Plan (25 YEP), published in January 2018, recognises the need for improved planning to inform decisions about protecting and improving the environment. The 25 YEP committed to developing local natural capital plans (LNCPS) to better join up across a wide set of organisations whose decisions affect the environment and will help to prioritise investments in it.

In December 2018 the Government published draft Principles and Governance clauses that will underpin the anticipated new Environment Bill that will give statutory force to many elements of the 25 YEP. The draft clauses set out the framework of a new system of green governance for when the UK has left the EU, including the creation of the Office for Environmental Protection.

## Recent developments

The IPCC report of October 2018 has prompted a significant increase in national and international popular protest about climate change. A campaign of civil disobedience has included disrupting traffic at key locations in London, as well as disrupting local council meetings. School students' climate strikes, which started in early 2019 to protest against the Government's lack of action on the climate crisis, were loosely organised by the UK Student Climate Network (UKSCN). They want the Government to declare a 'climate emergency', to reform the national curriculum to include this as an educational priority and to lower the age of voting to 16.

Local councils are setting targets for reducing emissions and going zero carbon. In November 2018, Bristol and Manchester City Councils passed motions declaring a 'climate emergency' and setting targets aiming to be carbon neutral by 2030 and 2038 respectively. **Since then, there has been a wave of 'climate emergency' declarations by over 60 councils across the UK (including a number of ADEPT council members).**

In March 2019, the Chancellor's Spring Statement 2019 identified a series of actions, including a pledge to halve the energy use of new-build homes by 2030. Specifically, the Chancellor announced that all new homes built from 2025 will be required to be heated by systems free from fossil fuels.

On 1st May 2019, in the wake of further direct action by protestors that caused disruption in London and other cities, the House of Commons endorsed an Opposition motion to declare a formal climate and environment emergency. Responding for the Government, the Environment Secretary, Michael Gove, said he accepted "that the situation we face is an emergency", and called for a consensual, cross-party approach so the UK could take a lead on climate action. The following day, the CCC reported back on its review of carbon budgets, stating that the UK is forecast to miss existing carbon targets in 2025 and 2030, and that hitting zero emissions in 2050 will require a leap in the ambition of government policy, particularly on heating and transport. The CCC called for an immediate, legally binding target to cut greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050.

On 12th June 2019, the Prime Minister announced that the UK will eradicate its net contribution to climate change by 2050. The statutory instrument to implement this was laid before Parliament, to amend the Climate Change Act 2008. This means that the UK is on track to become the first G7 country to legislate for net zero emissions, although the Prime Minister's statement said that the position would be reviewed after five years to confirm that other countries are taking similarly ambitious action and to ensure that the UK's industries do not face unfair competition.



- ADEPT members are the place-making strategists and policy shapers across top tier local authority areas
- ADEPT members are specialists, delivering services and sharing best practice across key sectors including environment, planning, housing, transport and economy
- ADEPT members design strategies for the future, taking communities beyond 2035
- ADEPT members operate in networks, cutting through boundaries to work with partners across the political, public, private and community sectors
- ADEPT members provide opportunities to develop new talent, supporting the Place Directors of tomorrow

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