



Britain's climate and ecological emergency

A manifesto for the 2019 General Election



***CIWEM is the leading independent Chartered professional body
for water and environmental professionals, promoting excellence
within the sector.***

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Prioritise the climate and ecological emergency

We have a decade in which to set ourselves firmly on the trajectory to a zero-carbon economy if we are to stand a hope of keeping global warming to a maximum of 1.5°C and avoid dangerous climate change.

The next government will be in power for half of this decade.

Our nature is also in crisis with too many species in serious decline and at risk of extinction. Combatting the climate and ecological crisis must therefore be established firmly at the heart of policymaking.

Going into the year that we host a crucial climate summit, the UK must firmly establish itself as a green leader on a global scale and be bedding in measures to achieve our ambitious and legally binding net zero by 2050 target.

To set us on the right course, we strongly encourage you to reflect the measures set out in the following pages within your party's manifesto. As an expert body we can bring extensive knowledge to bear on these and many other environmental concerns and we will be pleased to work with you in coming years to deliver the environmental recovery that is so vital to the future of our society.

Strengthen environmental governance post-Brexit

The environment must be at the heart of Britain's future, regardless of how Brexit plays out. Outside of the European Union, the UK will need strong environmental governance to ensure there is no deterioration of environmental standards from those which have protected society and nature under EU membership.

Priority must immediately be given to the protection and enhancement of our natural environment and biodiversity through a strong Environment Bill, taking forward and strengthening the legislation laid before Parliament by the previous government.

As actions fundamental to combatting the climate and ecological emergency, we call on the next government to deliver:

1. Expansion of low carbon energy
2. Homes and places resilient to a changing climate
3. A clear route to sustainable transport and infrastructure, and healthier more productive local communities
4. Nature recovery on a national scale
5. Greener supply chains



Expansion of low carbon energy

Back renewables including onshore wind

Renewables are now at cost parity with coal and gas in many parts of the world and deliver added benefits such as [reduced air pollution](#). The cost of new capacity for many technologies including offshore and onshore wind and solar is plummeting and is now at cost parity, or cheaper, than new fossil fuel powered generation in the UK.

New onshore wind power has been effectively blocked through the planning system in recent years and the roll-out of renewables other than offshore wind has been inadequate. **Expansion of renewable energy must be prioritised by the next government, and the block on onshore wind must be removed.**

End support for fossil fuels at home and abroad

In order to meet our legally binding carbon budgets, we must reduce our overall gas consumption, and expand our domestic renewable heat supply including renewable gas.

This commitment to renewables must be reflected not only in domestic policy and business but also overseas. UK Export Finance gave £2.4 billion to support fossil fuel projects in low- and middle-income countries between 2013 and 2018¹. Investing in unsustainable fossil fuel technologies is completely incompatible with establishing the UK as a global climate leader and runs counter to our climate targets. **The next government must commit to end all subsidies for fossil fuels and their associated supply chains, at home and abroad.**

Homes and places resilient to a changing climate

A future homes standard fit for the future

Homes account for 20% of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK². **A new home and retrofit programme for energy efficiency and decarbonisation of heat supply** is urgently needed. 85% of UK households currently use natural gas for heat, and natural gas heat supply accounts for approximately 10% of the average UK household's carbon emissions³.

A Future Homes Standard must be in place by 2025 at the latest. To be robust and inform the next generation of our housing, it must go beyond energy and mandate **standards for a range of sustainable water considerations**.

These must include water efficiency, including a requirement for water efficiency labelling and an **ambitious per capita consumption target** to [reduce water use](#). Forthcoming research suggests tightening minimum standards and building regulations for water using products could deliver around 1,000 MI/d of savings in water use by 2065, compared to current ambition⁴.

Beyond water consumption, this standard should also drive forward extensive increased use of rainwater harvesting, green roofs (which also have thermal as well as biodiversity benefit) and other [multifunctional sustainable drainage](#) components. And to maintain and drive forward innovation in our future homes, local authorities who want to go beyond current building regulations should not be restricted from doing so.





Greater focus on climate adaptation and resilience

Implementing these measures will not only help to deliver the zero-carbon building stock we need to achieve climate targets, crucially it will ensure that homes are more resilient to the effects of the climate change we know will come in the next decades irrespective of how urgently we decarbonise.

We are predicted to have warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers albeit with more intense and frequent rainfall events in coming years⁵. Floods, droughts, heatwaves and other extremes of weather, which can have devastating impacts on peoples' homes and lives together with considerable impacts on the economy, will be more likely⁶.

Whilst the Climate Change Act has until recently provided an effective legal driver to ensure progress on decarbonisation (we are currently falling behind target on achieving its latest carbon budget), it is less effective at driving a concerted climate adaptation and resilience programme in the UK.

Given the climate emergency, the next government must ensure that we not only plan for and deliver net zero by 2050 but that in tandem we **build communities that are resilient and well-adapted to our changing climate**.

[Resilience and adaptation planning](#) must become the norm across our economy and society with the current **Adaptation Reporting Power made mandatory for all qualifying bodies**, rather than voluntary.

A **clear vision of what climate resilience looks like in the UK must be developed** across all sectors of the economy and society, in order to identify where we need to plan to get to. Currently such a vision does not exist and is, effectively, the resilience equivalent of the *net zero* concept.

The **National Adaptation Programme must then be completely reviewed** so that it works as a systematic programme for enhancing resilience over time rather than an ad-hoc list of actions. This will involve greater commitment to strong planning policies which recognise a changing climate, increased investment in flood risk management including preparing to relocate at risk communities in the most extreme cases. It must **establish resilience milestones** against which progress can be tracked.

A clear route to sustainable transport and infrastructure, and healthier more productive local communities

Revised targets for low and zero emissions vehicles

Technological advancement in electric vehicles is progressing at a rapid pace. The **ban on the sale of combustion fuel only cars should be brought forward to the end of 2025**, meaning that **all new cars sold from 2026 should be hybrid as a minimum** (this already being established technology with most manufacturers).

These updated targets would enable a transition to **zero emission (100% electric) only new vehicles sales by 2040**, involving a roll-out of appropriate charging infrastructure upgrades and implementation.

Investment in the health and productivity driver of active transport

There is [extensive evidence](#) that designing urban places around the car undermines social integration, local economic productivity, human health and wellbeing, amenity and biodiversity, not to mention local [air pollution](#), with very considerable associated costs for the economy⁷. With a quarter of all journeys being less than 1 mile, **the transition towards zero emissions vehicles must be accompanied by a parallel transition to far greater use of active transport for local journeys.**

This will bring considerable economic benefits in tackling public health crises such as obesity and reducing productivity losses. Recent government strategies have made the right noises but have failed to support these with remotely proportionate investment. **Future governments must commit at least 5% of total transport investment to building new cycling and walking infrastructure to set society and the economy on a healthier path.**



Nature recovery on a national scale

Invest in nature's economic support services

Investment in the environment and the vital support services it provides to our economy must be reviewed to allow the climate and ecological crisis to be addressed.

Funding constraints are a [major barrier to delivering the 25 Year Environment Plan](#)⁸, and the State of Nature 2019 report strongly demonstrated the effect of insufficient investment in nature⁹. We urgently need a **national programme of nature recovery**, subject to clear strategic oversight and scrutiny, and matched by the resources to deliver it.

As we leave the European Union, an ambitious strategy to replace the Common Agricultural Policy is also needed. This must move away from area-based payments to a **public money for public goods** approach in order to provide sustainable and high-quality food alongside the environmental benefits we all rely on, for example delivering reduced flood risk and increasing biodiversity. This approach has been [well received since proposed in the Agriculture Bill](#) in the last Parliament and must be taken forward by the new government in the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme design and appropriate legislation.

To protect our environment and the nation's health the ELM scheme should support sustainable farming practices. Food can and should be produced alongside nature, avoiding the use of unnecessary chemical inputs wherever possible.





Reforestation for carbon sequestration, nature and flood risk management

Tree planting rates in Scotland are high, but in England only 1,420 hectares were planted in the year to March 2019, meaning the government fell over 70% short of their 5,000-hectare target¹⁰. There must be a clear commitment and action on an ambitious, sensitive and sustainable **reforestation programme delivering 30,000 hectares of new woodland per year**, in line with the recommendations by the Committee on Climate Change to reach our carbon reduction targets¹¹.

Benefits are considerably wider than carbon sequestration, helping to recover nature and protect downstream communities from flood risk. The new ELM scheme should simplify support for afforestation of unproductive land and agroforestry.

Strengthen Biodiversity Net Gain

We must implement a landscape approach to habitat creation and conservation, delivering more, bigger, better and joined up areas of natural habitat to create a coherent and resilient ecological network¹². **Biodiversity Net Gain** (BNG) within the planning system will be an important mechanism for achieving this and will need to be implemented strongly.

Proposals to maintain land for **BNG** for 30 years are insufficient and seriously risk reversion to unsustainable use. This requirement should be increased to 50 years. In addition, the exclusion of BNG requirements from major infrastructure projects must be reversed as these can have considerable impact on important and historic wildlife sites.

Greener supply chains

Concerted measures to reduce plastic and food waste

Population increase is causing rising food demand, but agriculture already occupies more than one third of land and 75% freshwater globally¹³. The new government must introduce measures to **reduce food waste** alongside sustainable farming practices. Supply chains must also provide a fair return to farmers to allow them to focus less on yield and more on long term sustainability. Addressing food waste through statutory reduction targets will allow less intensive farming practices whilst maintaining food security.

Reducing the use of single-use packaging is still at the forefront of public consciousness. The next government should build on the foundation of the recent [Resources and Waste Strategy](#) and drive progress further and faster. Measures to implement a more **circular economy** are urgent: We must drive measures up the waste hierarchy, focusing and designing and incentivising for re-use and repair instead of focusing on recycling.

Investment into research on microplastic pollution

The next government must tackle plastic pollution at all levels, prioritising strong extended producer responsibility (EPR) measures to drive down single-use plastic use. At the other end of the scale, **microplastics** have been found in every point of the supply chain, and accumulate in soil, freshwater and marine environments. More research is urgently required to understand the [impact of microplastics](#) on human health and on nature (our food chain), both on land and in water, so that we can understand more clearly where and how to target measures to address this pollution.



References

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- ⁴ CIWEM. 2019. [Measures to reduce personal water use](#)
- ⁵ Met Office. 2018. [UKCP18 – headline findings](#).
- ⁶ CIWEM. 2019. [Climate Resilience and Extreme Events: Recommendations for building a resilient society](#)
- ⁷ CIWEM. 2014. [The case for action by the Active Transport for Healthy Living Coalition](#)
- ⁸ CIWEM. 2019. [25 Year Environment Plan: ambition to reality](#).
- ⁹ State of Nature. 2019. <https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/>
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- ¹¹ BBC. 2019. [Climate change: Tree planting rise 'needs to happen quickly'](#)
- ¹² Professor Sir John Lawton. 2010. [Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network](#).
- ¹³ POST. 2019. [Preparing for a changing world](#)

