Government response to the Committee on Climate Change

Progress on meeting carbon budgets and preparing for climate change

Summary Document

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This Government remains committed to our carbon targets and to protecting this country from the impacts of climate change already underway.

Unchecked climate change is an economic risk to this country. It is a risk to our continued growth and our way of life. It will have an impact on all of us, in many different ways, and a whole range of our activity will have a bearing on whether we are able to keep climate change within 2°C.

We will meet our climate change commitments, cutting carbon emissions as cheaply as possible. Our approach will be pragmatic and focussed on keeping bills low for hardworking families and businesses, while the essential work of reducing emissions carries on at pace.

We should be proud of what we have achieved so far to tackle climate change. Our track record is strong. Provisional figures for 2014 show that emissions fell by 8.4% between 2013 and 2014 while the UK’s economy grew by 3%. Our renewable electricity capacity almost trebled between 2010 and 2014. As the Committee on Climate Change makes clear, between 2013 and 2014 we had the largest reduction in emissions from the power sector since reporting began.

At the same time, we are committed to increasing our resilience to climate change impacts such as flooding, in a cost-effective manner. We are investing £2.3 billion over the next six years in flood and coastal erosion risk management through our capital investment programme. This funding will reduce the flood risk for over 300,000 households by 2021.

Despite this strong progress, we know that reducing emissions and preparing for the inevitable impacts of climate change will be challenging. It won’t be an overnight transformation but instead will require a long-term transition which will impact every part of the economy.

We have tackled many, but not all, of the easy-wins. This makes our task harder as we look ahead to the fourth carbon budget covering the period 2023-2027. We are also not yet at the point where full consideration of current and future impacts of climate change is standard practice across the country.

We have an important twelve months ahead of us. Internationally, the Conference of Parties in Paris in December 2015 is our chance to secure a binding global deal on emissions reduction. Domestically, next
year we will set the level of the fifth carbon budget which, for the first time, will set out our level of ambition for reducing emissions into the 2030s. On adaptation we are little over a year from the publication of the next Climate Change Risk Assessment which will update our understanding of the priorities for the next stage of the National Adaptation Programme.

This is the first response to the Committee on Climate Change in this Parliament. As it comes before the Spending Review and only five months after the general election, we are still considering our approach in a number of areas. It is important that we invest the time now to consider the right framework and the right approach to reduce emissions during the 2020s and prepare for climate change impacts. After we set the fifth carbon budget (by the end of June 2016), we will be able to set out more detail about our expectation for how we intend to meet the targets. Our new emissions reduction plan towards the end of 2016 will set out our proposals in full. Similarly for adaptation, once we have updated our Climate Change Risk Assessment we will have a greater understanding of where to prioritise future activity leading up to the development of the next National Adaptation Programme report.

It is the role of Government to set the level of ambition, the framework and the rules. But ultimately businesses, central and local government, communities and individuals all need to work in tandem to reduce emissions and prepare for the impacts.

The Committee’s report, bringing together their valuable expertise and input, highlights the scale of the challenge for both mitigation and adaptation. But it also shows that there is enormous opportunity for the UK in general, and our businesses in particular, to develop the innovative technologies and services that we will need to deliver cleaner and more secure growth over the coming decades.

So, with that in mind, we would like to thank the Committee for their recommendations and joint conclusions on adaptation and mitigation. Our response sets out the initial position from this Government and is an important step on the way to delivering on our commitments.

Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change

Rt Hon Liz Truss MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
In June 2015 the Committee on Climate Change and the Adaptation Sub-Committee published the seventh progress report on Government’s mitigation activity and the first statutory assessment of the National Adaptation Programme. A third document provided a summary of the issues for both adaptation and mitigation and presented five main recommendations for Government on climate change.

The Government response is divided in the same way, with this overarching document supported by two more detailed responses on mitigation and adaptation.

The Committee on Climate Change made a number of recommendations on mitigation to the UK Government and to the Devolved Administrations. The responses from the Devolved Administrations are contained in the full mitigation response (chapter 8).

The National Adaptation Programme, and the Committee on Climate Change’s assessment of it, are focussed on England and reserved matters only. The same remit applies to the adaptation elements of this response.
The Government is committed to taking action on climate change. We need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and make our transition to a clean, low-carbon economy. This is about taking action in every sector in the economy – our homes, businesses, transport and agriculture – and seizing the huge economic opportunity that clean growth presents to the UK.

We are also working to reduce emissions globally. This includes pushing for a global deal at the Conference of Parties in Paris in December 2015 and ensuring there are legally binding rules in place to hold all countries to account.

However, we are already feeling the impact of climate change and even with significant global reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, climate projections suggest we are already committed to further increases in temperature and other climatic changes over coming decades. As such, we need to continue efforts to reduce emissions and simultaneously adapt and build resilience to the impacts of a changing climate that either cannot be avoided or are happening already. This will put the country in a position to take advantage of any opportunities that may emerge and contribute to our competitiveness and prosperity.

Our requirements under the Climate Change Act 2008

The Climate Change Act 2008 provides the framework for our domestic action, binding this and future Governments to a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% below the 1990 baseline by 2050. It also established a series of carbon budgets to help us on our pathway to 2050. These budgets set a limit on the amount of greenhouse gases we can emit over a five year period. We will be setting the fifth carbon budget, covering the period from 2028 to 2032, by the end of June 2016.

Along with requirements for climate change mitigation, the Act created a framework for building the UK’s ability to adapt to climate change. It established a requirement for a UK-wide Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) to be produced every five years, a National Adaptation Programme (NAP) to address the most pressing climate change risks to be produced and reviewed following each CCRA, and introduced a mandate giving the UK Government and the Welsh Government the power to require public authorities and statutory undertakers to report on how they assess and address the risks to their work from climate change.
The Act also established the Committee on Climate Change and the Adaptation Sub-Committee with duties to provide independent assessment on the progress of the Government’s climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes.

**Progress**

We met the first carbon budget (2008–2012) and our projections show that we are on track to meet the second and third (2013–2017 and 2018–2022). Overall, in 2013 our emissions were 30% lower than in 1990, our base year.

However, we cannot be complacent. We know we have a challenge over the fourth carbon budget period (2023–2027) where our emissions are projected to be greater than the cap set by the budget. This shortfall was acknowledged when the budget was set in 2011 and in this Parliament the Government will come forward with options to address the shortfall. We are currently carefully assessing our approach for a post–2020 framework. This includes the level of support for low-carbon technologies in the power sector, our forward plan to tackle emissions from buildings and our next steps on electric vehicles. We intend to say more after we set the fifth carbon budget (by the end of June 2016). Our new emissions reduction plan will be published towards the end of 2016 and will set out our proposals in full.

On adaptation, the first UK Climate Change Risk Assessment was published in 2012. It sets out risks and opportunities to the UK from climate change up to the end of the century. This was followed by the first National Adaptation Programme (NAP) report in 2013 which sets out around 370 individual actions that are preparing us for the impacts identified in the Risk Assessment.

As with mitigation, we know there is still much more that we can do on adaptation. We need to build on the first National Adaptation Programme report to further ensure that the future impacts of climate change are factored in as part of ‘business as usual’ thinking across all sectors and organisations.
Responses to the CCC’s main recommendations

The Committee on Climate Change made five main recommendations to Government. Our response to these is set out here. These recommendations and responses should be viewed alongside the more detailed, standalone reports which cover 35 further recommendations on mitigation and 36 on adaptation. These reports cover a broader range of issues in greater detail.

**Recommendation 1**

Electricity: Ensure the power sector can invest with a 10-year lead time. As soon as possible, set the Government’s carbon objective for the power sector in the 2020s and extend funding under the Levy Control Framework to match project timelines (e.g. to 2025 with rolling annual updates).

We recognise that low carbon electricity projects often have long lead times and need long-term visibility of available support.

The **Levy Control Framework** (LCF), which set support levels for clean electricity up to 2020/21, aims to provide this certainty while keeping costs down for consumers. Significant commitments have been made against the LCF for future years which will drive continued progress towards our renewables and low carbon ambitions.

We also recognise the challenges the current LCF end date poses for developers of projects that wish to commission in the next decade (i.e. beyond 2020/21).

We have therefore announced our intention to set out our approach to the LCF beyond 2020. The Government intends to set out plans in the autumn in respect of future Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation rounds.

We continue to push at the European level for further reform to the EU Emissions Trading System, so that it provides a stronger, long-term price signal to drive investment in low-carbon electricity, and industrial production.

We will cut emissions as cost-effectively as possible. It is vital that we take careful account of the costs of our policies so that we are not imposing unnecessary burdens on households and businesses, making household bills unaffordable or putting the UK at a competitive disadvantage.

**Recommendation 2**

Buildings: Develop plans and policies that deliver low-carbon heat and energy efficiency, whilst also addressing the increasing risks of heat stress and flooding.

(a) Develop an action plan to address the significant shortfall in low-carbon heat, ensuring a better integration with energy efficiency and fuel poverty. Commit to the Renewable Heat Incentive to 2020, or until a suitable replacement is found.

(b) Set out the future of the Energy Company Obligation beyond 2017, ensuring it delivers energy efficiency while also meeting fuel poverty targets.
(c) Implement the zero carbon homes standard without further weakening, ensuring investment in low-carbon heat.

(d) Introduce a standard to prevent new homes overheating, and promote passive cooling in existing buildings.

(e) Develop a strategy to address the increasing number of homes in areas of high flood risk, with the ‘Flood Re’ subsidised flood insurance scheme playing a central role.

We need to find solutions that reduce emissions from heating our buildings in cold weather while also being able to efficiently keep them cool in hot weather, and provide low carbon heating for hot water and cooking all year round.

Reducing emissions from buildings will require improved energy efficiency measures and changes to heating systems in properties. The Government is committed to considering both together through a stable long-term framework which explores the potential role of regulation, and to thinking about them from the perspective of consumers, home-owners, landlords, tenants and industry.

We recognise the need for a stronger long-term plan to address low-carbon heat. It is unlikely that there will be one single “low carbon heat” solution for buildings. Our approach will look at:

- Individual buildings. We are considering changes to energy efficiency measures and heating systems.
- Communities, towns, cities and regions. The Heat Network Delivery Unit (HNDU) is currently working with local authorities to plan low carbon heat networks across England and Wales, where these make economic sense and work for consumers. This is complemented with innovation and research work to ensure new low carbon sources of heat, such as recovered heat, are fully exploited, and working with other regional local development plans where heat networks may be an important part of the energy package.
- The role of energy use in buildings in supporting the whole energy system, which links us all together. This means looking at existing gas grid infrastructure (we are considering the potential of options for using green gases like bio-methane or green hydrogen), as well as at how smarter meters, controls and appliances like heat pumps, and greater decentralised storage and generating capacity through heat networks and Combined Heat and Power (CHP), can all offer balancing and security of supply opportunities in tandem with electricity grid decarbonisation.

Decisions on the future of the Renewable Heat Incentive are a matter for the Spending Review.

We are currently considering the right long-term framework for the home energy efficiency market, and are working with the building industry and consumer groups on an improved value-for-money approach. The longer-term future of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is part of these considerations. The design of any future schemes beyond ECO, which runs until March 2017, will ensure that we meet our targets for homes insulated while also supporting our commitment to tackle fuel poverty and ensuring good value for money.

As detailed in the Productivity Plan the Government will not implement Zero Carbon Homes. The Zero Carbon Homes standard, in particular the Allowable Solutions carbon off-setting element, would have placed a significant regulatory burden on the house building industry.
In the last Parliament, the Government strengthened the energy efficiency requirements for new homes twice.

The latest change to the energy efficiency requirements only came into force in April 2014 and new homes will continue to be built to these high standards.

In regard to energy efficiency standards for new buildings, the Government must also meet its obligations set out in the European Commission’s Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. As part of this the Government must report to the Commission in 2017 to ensure that UK building standards remain ‘cost optimal’ and that all new buildings are ‘nearly zero energy buildings’ from 2021.

For businesses, the Government is conducting a review of business energy taxation, with the aim of simplifying the landscape and improving incentives to save energy and reduce carbon emissions.

Climate change also presents a greater risk of overheating in buildings. We agree with the importance of this issue, as identified by the Committee and supported by the evidence of the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment. We will consider and support research to understand better what an overheating standard might look like and the options to help industry and others address the risks. However, we need to explore further the associated costs and benefits of different options before making a commitment as to how we will reduce the risk.

Improved research is an important element of meeting the wider goal of addressing the risk of overheating. Passive cooling is another element but should not be the only focus. More broadly, the Government has supported work by the Zero Carbon Hub to tackle overheating in homes with a view to deciding what the next steps should be in addressing overheating risk in new dwellings. Meanwhile, the Government has recently published guidance to increase climate resilience of the healthcare estate\(^1\) and to make energy work in healthcare\(^2\) which includes recommendations on reducing mechanical cooling. There is also potential to explore behavioural, educational, duty of care and commissioning routes.

With respect to development in areas at risk of flooding, planning policy directs new development away from highest risk areas. This does not rule out all new development in areas at high risk of flooding, which include parts of central London and cities such as Hull, if there are no suitable and reasonably available sites in areas with a lower probability of flooding and the development is made safe, appropriately flood resilient and resistant, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and any residual risk can be safely managed.

We believe that a strategy to address future residual risk would not be appropriate at this time. Significant activity in this area is already underway or planned.

We are working with the Environment Agency to understand further how changes to the timing of investment of flood risk management schemes can be reflected in the Long Term Investment Scenarios to enhance our understanding of future flood risk. We also need to consider the impact from existing activities to increase uptake of property-level resilience, as well as find ways to address the behavioural barriers to action on flood resilience at an individual property and community level.

Flood Re will provide some of the answer. Although insurance will only ever be part of the wider solution it is important that it

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1. Health Building Note: HBN 00-07, April 2014.
provides the right incentives for households and insurers to put in place necessary resilience measures.

**Recommendation 3**
Transport: Maintain support for the upfront costs of electric vehicles, while they remain more expensive than conventional alternatives and push for stretching 2030 EU CO2 targets for new cars and vans.

Our aim is for almost every car and van to be a zero emission vehicle by 2050.

The Government will spend over £500m over the next five years to drive the uptake of ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs).

The UK is already performing well when compared internationally – we have the second largest market after the USA in sales of the best-selling EV, the Nissan LEAF, and the highest number of registrations of ULEVs in the EU in 2014. Examples of UK policies driving the uptake of ULEVs are as follows:

- **Plug-in Car Grant**: provides a discount on the upfront-cost of an eligible ultra-low emission car, currently worth £5,000 or 35%. It was confirmed in August that the grant would remain at the same level until March 2016.

- **Plug-in Van Grant**: provides up to £8,000 or 20% of the upfront cost of an eligible ultra-low emission van.

- **Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme**: provides up to 75% or £700 of the capital costs associated with installing and commissioning a domestic charge point.

- **Low Carbon Truck Trial**: the Government is helping operators establish and run fleets of low carbon heavy goods vehicles (HGVs).

- **The Ultra Low Emission Taxi fund**: will provide up to £20m for local authorities across the UK to reduce the upfront cost of purpose-built taxis and to install charging infrastructure for taxi and private hire use.

We want to build on the effective existing EU regulation on new car and van tailpipe emissions to 2020.

Since their introduction, EU tailpipe regulations have proven highly effective in improving fuel efficiency, reducing running costs for consumers and significantly cutting CO$_2$ emissions from road transport. They have provided a stable environment for vehicle manufacturers and technology suppliers to make essential long-term investments in low carbon technology innovation, research and development and supported the introduction of ultra-low emission vehicles to the market.

We want to capitalise on the global move toward ultra-low emission vehicles, to deliver growth and productivity benefits in the UK for decades to come. There are strong indications that the UK’s long term and comprehensive package of support for ULEVs is already starting to deliver in terms of inward investment. 2014/15 saw a series of positive ULEV-related announcements. This builds on earlier investment decisions including Nissan production of the LEAF at its Sunderland plant and Toyota’s decision to make Burnaston its first plant outside Japan to make hybrid vehicles.
Recommendation 4

Infrastructure: Make decisions that help reduce emissions and improve the resilience of infrastructure networks and services during periods of extreme weather. A range of infrastructure decisions to be made this Parliament could have significant impacts. Foremost amongst these is the need for carbon capture and storage (CCS). Others include requirements for infrastructure support for heat networks and electric vehicles. Decisions taken now need to avoid ‘lock-in’ to high carbon pathways and vulnerability to climate change risks.

We agree that decisions taken on infrastructure over this parliament could have significant impacts on our ability to make longer term cuts to emissions and reduce our longer-term vulnerability to climate change risks.

The Government is committed to delivering on its National Infrastructure Plan, which sets out a strategic vision for UK infrastructure and outlines clear delivery plans for each of the key economic infrastructure sectors to 2020-21 and beyond. This contains a number of priority investments and underlying key projects which support the development of low-carbon infrastructure including; rail electrification; low-carbon energy, such as nuclear and renewables; energy efficiency measures such as Smart Meters; and, reducing emissions through Carbon Capture and Storage. In response to the specific technologies identified by the CCC:

- **Carbon Capture and Storage**: the Government has acknowledged the important role that CCS can play in decarbonising the UK power sector, whilst providing secure generation with the flexibility to respond to changes in demand. Government also recognises that CCS is a key option for decarbonising energy intensive industries, as highlighted by the 2050 decarbonisation and energy efficiency roadmaps. The Government also recognises that the availability of transport and storage (T&S) infrastructure is an essential factor in the commercialisation of CCS. The CCS Commercialisation Programme includes within its scope a requirement for any winning project to deliver the first “anchor T&S infrastructure”, which would enable future CCS projects to utilise and form the basis for reducing costs.

- **Electric vehicles**: The Government will continue to support recharging infrastructure for electric vehicles, through the Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme (EVHS). The Road Investment Strategy for Highways England also announced £15m to meet the aspiration that drivers on the Strategic Road Network are never more than 20 miles from a charge point.

- **Heat Networks**: as noted above, the Heat Network Delivery Unit (HNDU) is currently working with local authorities to plan low carbon heat networks across England and Wales.

There are a number of mechanisms already in place which help us secure the resilience of our infrastructure networks. Planning policies for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are set out in National Policy Statements which include policies on adapting to climate change. In addition, Government departments produce sector resilience plans. These set out the resilience of the UK’s most important infrastructure to the relevant risks identified in the National Risk Assessment.³ This is an important issue which will be picked up as part of the Strategic Defence and Security Review which we expect to be published towards the end of the year.

Importantly, our infrastructure and network providers are alive to the issues raised by climate change and have done much work on adaptation. Some examples are provided below.

Water companies will continue to prepare and maintain water resources management plans, which set out how each water company will manage its water resources to ensure a secure supply and demand balance over the longer term (at least 25 years). In addition, water companies prepare drought plans setting out how they will continue to supply water in a drought. In addition, we are taking steps to discuss with the water industry the challenges facing them in securing the long-term resilience of water supply and sewerage systems against the increasing challenges of environmental pressures and population growth.

The Transport Resilience Review has picked up a range of issues that will be exacerbated by climate change. Operators are reviewing the vulnerabilities identified as part of their contingency planning.

The electricity transmission and distribution network companies have worked, together with Ofgem and under the auspices of the Energy Networks Association, to produce a risk-based methodology that provides guidance on how to improve the resilience of electricity substations to coastal and fluvial flooding to a level that is acceptable to customers, Ofgem and the Government. Using the Report, the Government, Ofgem and industry have agreed flood resilience targets for National Grid substations and Distribution Network Operators’ primary stations.

The Adaptation Reporting Power under the Climate Change Act has a role to play in supporting infrastructure resilience and ensuring climate change impacts are taken into account in the short and longer term. We will consider how future cycles of reporting will take place, following a review of the current reporting round, between 2016/2017 and the outcome of a full public consultation.

**Recommendation 5**

Land and water management: Preserve and enhance the country’s natural capital, in order to sustain agriculture productivity in a changing climate, maximise carbon sequestration, and safeguard the economic and amenity benefits the natural environment provides.

(a) Announce firm measures to preserve the fertility and organic content of important agricultural soils, to achieve the stated goal for all soils to be sustainably managed by 2030.

(b) Accelerate efforts to restore England’s priority natural assets and counter long-term declines in the ecological condition of the farmed countryside.

(c) Review the effectiveness of agri-environment schemes in controlling damaging practices on internationally-protected peatland sites.

Our environmental assets – land, sea, water, air and wildlife – underpin our prosperity and wellbeing. The Government has committed to extend the life of the Natural Capital Committee out until at least the end of this Parliament and is developing refreshed Terms of Reference that will inform the next phase of the Committee’s work. The Government will be working with the Committee to develop a framework for action on the environment that makes use of data, technology, valuing nature and market mechanisms among the means to achieve our ambitions. We will use data and technology to establish a consistent understanding of the benefits provided by the environment so its value is fully recognised, and businesses and communities invest in UK environmental assets. Smarter use of technologies such as satellite monitoring and
precision farming will allow us to address environmental issues more effectively than ever before, and offer British industries the chance to lead the world.

Agricultural Productivity will be supported through Defra’s 25 Year Food and Farming Plan, while our environmental framework will help protect and enhance the assets in our natural environment.

The Government recognises that soil is essential for providing a range of benefits, including food production, but also biodiversity, carbon storage and flood protection. We are working with Research Councils and funding research to improve our understanding of soil condition and resilience.

We will be exploring soil protection issues as we develop our approach to the natural environment.

New cross-compliance soil rules which came into effect on 1st January 2015 set requirements underpinning all basic payments claimed by farmers and land managers under the Common Agricultural Policy. The soil rules require that claimants: limit erosion, maintain soil cover and protect soil carbon.

As noted above, our framework for the environment will drive protection and enhancement of England’s environmental assets, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks.

There are examples of positive progress across the country. In the south west, Somerset is now the most important county in England for breeding bitterns, a member of the heron family, with 45 booming males in 2014. In 1997 there were just 11 booming males in the whole of England. Meanwhile in the north east, the Tees is the only known estuary in Europe where Harbour Seals have naturally re-colonised as a direct result of environmental improvements and the colony is once again breeding.

Countryside Stewardship builds on earlier Environmental Stewardship schemes by introducing a number of design features to encourage a targeted, landscape scale approach that delivers resilient ecological networks. This includes:

(a) Targeting and scoring: to ensure that the right land management options are applied in the right places.

(b) Facilitation: to provide groups of farmers help in designing agri-environment agreements that are sensitive to the environmental priorities in their area.

We are currently building on this existing programme to develop a new programme of monitoring to assess the ecological impact of schemes at large spatial scales. Developing an improved understanding of the role that schemes have in maintaining ecological networks will be a key part of this.

Agri-environment agreements fund changes to management activity to improve the environmental condition of habitats and species, and water quality issues related to peatland. This includes sustainable grazing levels, capital works to restore peatland hydrology and function (such as grip blocking), and agreeing suitable burning rotations and no burn areas.

With regards to the concerns around funding damaging practices, a payment has been used on blanket bog to secure changes, usually extensions to burning rotations and management which delivers environmental gains. It is not used as a payment to support ongoing damaging practice. Furthermore Natural England has already provided to the

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EU an outline timetable for reviewing burning consents as part of its wider statutory programme to review all consents on Natura 2000 sites.

An increase in Higher Level Stewardship agreements on Sites of Special Scientific Interest over the period 2007–14 has triggered the consenting process on an increased number of SSSIs. This should not be assumed to reflect an increase in burning. Indeed in the majority of cases it will have reduced burning frequency on a moorland unit and, as part of the consenting process, may have excluded burning altogether on blanket bogs under agreement.

As an example of positive activity delivered through agri-environment schemes, Natural England has worked with Moors for the Future Partnership to deliver moorland restoration through Environmental Stewardship and LIFE funding in the East Midlands. Work has included the restoration of 2030 hectares of degraded moorland. In the same region 30 large scale Higher Level Stewardship agreements have been negotiated in the last 3 years with moorland restoration plans delivering £18 million into the Peak District.