

# UK must ‘walk the talk’ on climate action, say official advisers

**As Cop26 president, UK must act on meat, fossil fuels and overseas aid, says Climate Change Committee**



A destroyed house and forest in Dominica after Hurricane Maria in 2017. Funding to help developing countries was a key issue in Glasgow. Photograph: Michael Lees

**Damian Carrington** *Environment editor*

@dpcarrington

Thu 2 Dec 2021 07.41 GMT

- 
- 
- 

The UK must “walk the talk” on climate action over the next 12 months, which will be critical in tackling the climate emergency, according to an **assessment of the Cop26 summit** by the Climate Change Committee.

The UK has one of the most ambitious 2030 emissions targets in the world, according to the government’s official advisers, but it does not have all the policies in place to deliver it.

In particular, the CCC said, the government must produce a robust plan for cutting emissions from farming, which produces 10% of UK emissions, and address a gap in behaviour change policy for shifting diets away from meat and dairy and limiting rising demand for flying.

The UK hosted **Cop26** in Glasgow and retains the presidency until November 2022, giving it a vital role in driving international action.

The CCC said overseas aid spending should return to 0.7% of GDP “as soon as possible”. The UK’s aid cut was criticised by developing countries at the summit as undermining trust in rich countries to deliver promised funding.

The UK and other countries also have a duty to act on the pledge in the Glasgow climate pact to phase out “inefficient fossil fuel subsidies”, though the CCC said no fossil fuel subsidies should be classed as efficient. The **UK subsidises fossil fuels by £12.5bn a year**, according to a report.

“The next year is critical for climate action in the UK and internationally,” said John Gummer, the chair of the CCC. “At home, we need to walk the talk and urgently deliver actions in the net zero strategy.

“Globally, the UK must continue to encourage stronger action on climate and insist on rapid emissions reductions and stronger adaptation through all diplomatic channels. The ultimate success of the Glasgow climate pact will be measured in climate risks averted, not words on a page.”

The CCC said **Cop26** delivered an increase in ambitions to cut carbon emissions worldwide but the current climate policies of countries did not come close to achieving these aims and would mean a catastrophic 2.7C of global heating.

It said the success of Cop26 could only be measured by the actions that follow in the coming year and beyond.

The government **published its net zero strategy** in October, which included the end of new gas boilers by 2035 and a mandate requiring carmakers to sell a minimum proportion of electric vehicles from 2024. The strategy largely followed the CCC’s advice but the advisers said on Thursday missing policies must be implemented urgently.

The CCC previously warned the strategy had “nothing to say” on reducing meat eating or limiting growth in flying, making hitting climate targets riskier and more difficult. The government published a **research paper on behaviour change** in October but swiftly withdrew it, saying it had been released by mistake.

On fossil fuel subsidies and other fiscal measures, the CCC recommended “the Treasury initiates a review of the role of the tax system in delivering net zero”. This was absent from a Treasury assessment published alongside the net zero strategy.

The CCC said the UK’s commitment to the Glasgow climate pact could be further demonstrated with stronger actions to tackle the UK’s wider carbon footprint, such as applying more stringent green standards to goods both from the UK and imported and levying a carbon border tax on polluting imports, as the EU was already considering.

The CCC also suggested using “trade levers”. The UK was criticised in September for **dropping references to the temperature goals of the Paris climate agreement** from a prospective trade deal with Australia.

Funding to help developing countries deal with the climate emergency was a key issue in Glasgow. The CCC said the UK’s continuing presidency must deliver on the commitments made, including a doubling of funding for adaptation and establishing a “constructive dialogue on loss and damage”.

Loss and damage is the term for compensation for the damage being caused in poorer countries, which have done little to cause global heating. In Glasgow a coalition of 134 countries, representing 85% of the world’s population, demanded the setting up of a loss-and-damage facility but the proposal was killed by the US.