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Our expertise

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Advice on reducing the UK's emissions

How the CCC advises on UK emissions targets

We assess the latest greenhouse gas emissions data to judge whether the UK is on course to meet its carbon budgets. We report progress to the UK Parliament and Parliaments in Scotland and Wales annually, and to Northern Ireland on request.

- UK emissions were 48% below 1990 levels in 2020 (This reduction reflects the impact COVID-19 had on emissions in 2020, much of which is not expected to be permanent. The fall in emissions between 2019 and 1990 was 40%).
- The first carbon budget (2008 to 2012) was met, as was the second (2013 to 2017) and the UK is on track to outperform the third (2018 to 2022). However, it is not on track to meet the fourth (2023 to 2027) or the fifth (2028-2032). To meet future carbon budgets and the Net Zero target for 2050 will require governments to introduce more challenging measures.
- Through the Climate Change Act, the UK government has committed to reduce emissions by at least **100% of 1990 levels (Net Zero) by 2050**.

As a signatory to the [Paris Agreement](#), the UK has committed to contribute to global emission reductions to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts towards 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Carbon budgets

The Climate Change Act requires the UK government to set legally-binding 'carbon budgets' which act as stepping stones towards the 2050 target. A carbon budget is a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five-year period. Budgets must be set at least 12 years in advance to allow policy-makers, businesses and individuals enough time to prepare. The CCC advises on the appropriate level of each carbon budget. Once accepted by Government, the respective budgets are legislated by Parliament. The budgets describe the cost-effective pathway to achieving the UK's long-term climate change objectives. They also take into account a range of other factors including scientific knowledge, technology, economic and social circumstances, amongst others.

The first five carbon budgets have been put into law and run up to 2032. The UK is currently in the third carbon budget period (2018 to 2022). The Committee has published its advice on the [Sixth Carbon Budget](#) and Government legislated for this in June 2021.

Budget	Carbon budget level	Reduction below 1990 levels	Met?
1st carbon budget (2008 to 2012)	3,018 MtCO ₂ e	25%	Yes
2nd carbon budget	2,782	31%	Yes

(2013 to 2017)	MtCO2e		
3rd carbon budget (2018 to 2022)	2,544 MtCO2e	37% by 2020	On track
4th carbon budget (2023 to 2027)	1,950 MtCO2e	51% by 2025	Off track
5th carbon budget (2028 to 2032)	1,725 MtCO2e	57% by 2030	Off track
6th carbon budget (2033 to 2037)	965 MtCO2e	78% by 2035	Off track
Net Zero Target		At least 100% by 2050	

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Climate Change Committee

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