

## How COP26 in the UK will help tackling climate change?

Communities, governments, ecosystems, and economies are currently facing two of the most challenging issues of our history: the coronavirus pandemic and climate change. Together with civil society's increasing needs and expectations to participate, be heard, and be included in positive social change.

The management of both crises, and facilitating effective solutions, requires working in partnership with all sectors from a *glocalised* ("think globally, act locally") standpoint. To create a more sustainable world, it is imperative to promote responsible dialogues, high level commitments, mandatory mechanisms to cope with the emergencies, as well as generating awareness and education on such crucial topics.

Now is the time. And for the UK, the upcoming 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 1 – 12 November 2021, is an unparalleled opportunity to lead the change.

### Climate change, from marginal subject to global priority

The last two decades, and particularly the last six years (Paris Agreement, 2015), the world leaders, together with scientists and environmental activists, have immersed themselves in recognizing, explaining, and promoting action-taking commitments to control the climate change catastrophe.

To get [back to basics](#), climate change is the variation of global or regional climate patterns, producing an increasing warming of the world's temperature. It is attributed largely to the levels of "greenhouse gas" produced and released into the atmosphere. These gases include mainly carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), but also others such as methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulphur hexafluoride.

Currently, the international goal is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, preferably to 1.5C (as agreed in Paris in 2015). However, this target requires unprecedented political effort and multi-stakeholder mobilisation and commitment to stabilise greenhouse-gas emissions.

### The UK momentum to 2050' net-zero pledge

For the year 2050, the UK has set a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero. In order to work collaboratively and achieve the goal, multiple measure are being discussed and binding acts are in place.

The Climate Change Act, among many other legally binding efforts, has help the authorities in the UK:

- Provide for a system of carbon budgeting
- Establish trading schemes for limiting greenhouse gas emissions or encouraging activities that reduce such emissions

- Promote the adaptation to climate change and the creation of schemes for providing financial incentives to produce less domestic waste and to recycle more of what is produced
- Make provision about the collection of household waste and about charging for single use carrier bags
- Make provision about carbon emissions reduction targets.

Within this context, and in the middle of a ‘new normality’ post-pandemic for Covid-19, this year’s COP26 under the UK’s presidency has the full-potential to set us as a leading voice in how to achieve deep emissions reduction. Discuss, share, and include all countries and interested parties in a feasible roadmap to 2050 net-zero targets.

## COP26

The next November Climate Change Conference, UK COP26, will focus on critical themes such as clean energy, clean transport, nature-based solutions, climate finance and adaptation and resilience. Given the global crisis, adaptation has become the central issue.

According to COP26 President Alok Sharma: “A short-term vision will be improving protections for one billion people globally by 2025.”

The UK Government is planning to host the conference in-person rather than virtually in Glasgow, explaining that for all parties involved “a face-to-face meeting is critical to deliver an inclusive summit, where all voices are heard, including the voices of developing countries, women, young people and indigenous peoples”.

Given that vulnerable communities, developing countries, and marginalised groups are some of the most impacted by climate change, the opportunity to have a physical summit with space on the table for all voices has been welcomed by many stakeholders.

## Local achievements ahead of COP26

The road to the global summit is a long one. Yet, it is a global as well as local priority to engage stakeholders into actionable steps. Governments and public offices; corporations and private organisations; third sector associations, activists, and voices from the civil society in the UK have already attained relevant goals and express their commitment to future progress.

Some recent and relevant ‘good news’ to prepared the road ahead include:

- The UK has announced a **legally binding** target of “net zero emissions” of greenhouse gases by 2050. The plan aims to give a 50% chance of keeping the increase in global average temperature to a minimum of 1.5 degrees.
- The UK’s [greenhouse gas emissions fell](#) for a seventh consecutive year in 2019 (according to Provisional data published by the government in March 2021). Since 2010 the UK’s emissions have come down by almost a third.

- [57 UK councils have joined a 'net-zero pledge'](#), meaning that 35% of the UK population is now represented by councils aiming to reach net-zero emissions five years ahead of Central Government's 2050 commitment.
- 2020 was a [record-breaking year for greener electricity](#) production, according to **National Grid ESO** (Electricity System Operator) data.
- The Government has confirmed that the UK is increasing the levy applied to single-use plastic carrier bags to 10p. The Department for Food, the Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) statistics show that 95% fewer single-use plastic bags are sold in supermarkets than they were in 2015. It now expects its use to fall by a further 70-80% for small and medium-sized businesses.

### Your contribution

In preparation for this year COP26, the commitments must involve everyone. As we are all part of the problem and part of the solution in the climate change and global warming emergency.

For you, as an individual, it is imperative to remember that we all have a role to play in the goal to reduce emissions, adapt to current resources, and build in climate resilience.

You can review some of our energy [guides](#) to take better and informed decisions or check how the [net-zero emissions by 2050 policy might affect you](#) and what you can do to be part of the change. In Selectra, we can help you to understand your choices for engaging in a more sustainable daily life.