



UK climate leadership and low carbon investment

A briefing for policy makers following
the EU referendum

Meeting the UK's legislated carbon budgets will require the government to ensure strong and effective energy and climate policies are maintained during and after the process of exiting the European Union. This will be essential to maintain the UK's position as an acclaimed global leader on climate change.





An acclaimed global climate leader

The UK has been at the forefront of climate action. The Climate Change Act, passed with overwhelming cross party support back in 2008, made the UK the first country to set a legally binding goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In November 2015, it became the first major economy to set a date to phase out unabated coal plants. Then, in December 2015, the UK made history again, joining the rest of the world in aiming to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. It ratified the Paris Agreement less than a year later.

A bold new emissions reduction plan

The present government has kept these ambitions alive. In its first few days it set in law an ambitious carbon target for the early 2030s. This target is not yet within reach, but the government recognises this and has promised a new emissions reduction plan. This plan will need to be bold, putting policies and funding in place to match the UK's impressive goals. It should:

1. Set out a clear route to market for renewable energy technologies and smart technologies, such as demand response and electricity storage.
2. Scale up strategic low carbon heat projects.
3. Invest in energy efficient homes and businesses.
4. Facilitate the roll-out of ultra-low emission transport while phasing out polluting vehicles.

This plan must be updated regularly and transparently, with the continued engagement of civil society and business to guide a successful decarbonisation policy in the years ahead.

Maintaining UK leadership and ensuring a thriving low carbon economy

As the Committee on Climate Change has recently reported, meeting the UK's legislated carbon budgets will require strong and effective energy and climate policies are maintained during and after the process of exiting the European Union. This will be essential to maintain the UK's position as an acclaimed global leader on climate change, while establishing its new place in the world and maximising the industrial benefits of a thriving low carbon economy.

Five climate and energy priorities for the EU exit negotiations

1. Continued high standards for vehicles and other energy-using goods

The UK should maintain EU vehicle emissions and energy efficiency standards. These facilitate trade, drive innovation, ensure UK consumers benefit from efficient products, and will avoid low quality products being dumped on the UK market.

2. Strong standards to limit harmful industrial emissions

Industrial emissions standards protect our health and underpin the government's laudable commitment to phase out coal power plants by 2025. UK standards should continue to match or exceed those of the EU. And, while the UK is still a member state, it should push for robust new emissions standards and strong implementation across the rest of Europe. This would help the EU to follow the UK's lead in phasing out coal, while significantly reducing the number of deaths in the UK and elsewhere caused by long range air pollution.

3. Continued free trade in low carbon electricity

Free trade in electricity keeps prices low, energy companies competitive, and our energy system secure. The UK should seek continued participation in the EU's internal energy market, and continued co-operation on increasing grid connections with the rest of Europe. This will minimise costs to consumers and avoid disruption to investment in the energy market, while enabling the UK to make full use of its low carbon energy resources, such as offshore wind.

4. Barrier-free market access for low carbon sectors

The UK will benefit from prioritising barrier free participation in the single market for sectors of strategic importance to the low carbon economy. Electric cars, offshore wind, smart grid technologies, and low carbon finance are four such priority areas for the UK.

5. Co-operation on ambitious low carbon goals

We must ensure that EU climate ambition does not decline after it loses the UK's leadership, because continued co-operation on climate change will help the UK to deliver on its domestic and international obligations. The UK should not disrupt the EU's agreed 2030 climate and energy framework as it exits, and should promote more effective carbon pricing mechanisms.

Our organisations are working together to promote climate leadership and low carbon investment. If you would like further information, please contact:

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