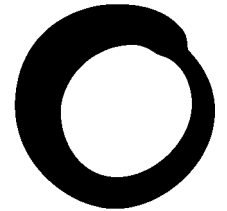


April 2009



**Friends of
the Earth**

Briefing

The 2020 climate change target

In April 2009 the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change will decide the 2020 target for greenhouse gas emissions and the first three five-year carbon budgets (2008-2012, 2013-2017, 2018-2022). This will place a legally binding ceiling on the level of allowed UK emissions.

New empirical evidence, including that presented at the March 2009 climate congress in Copenhagen, shows that emissions cuts need to be made much deeper and sooner than previously thought.

Friends of the Earth is calling on the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change to adopt an immediate target to cut greenhouse gas emissions within the UK by 42% by 2020. This is both achievable and would have benefits for the UK economy.

Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems, which make life better for people.

Friends of the Earth is:

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- the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost one million supporters across five continents and over 60 national organisations worldwide**
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in over 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.**

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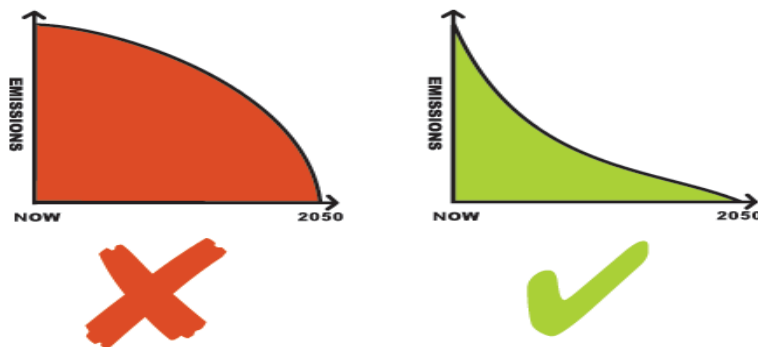
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Why is the 2020 target crucial?

The 2020 target sets the level of ambition of the Climate Change Act (2008). The pathway to the 80% 2050 target in the Climate Change Act will determine *total amount* of emissions and the impact on the climate. The graphs below illustrate (in simple terms!) that the cumulative emissions – the space under the curve – are very different depending on interim targets to 2050. It is the build-up of emissions over a period of time, not total emissions in any one year that will shape global temperature increases.



Why should the 42% 2020 target be adopted now?

MPs from all parties agreed that the long-term 2050 target in the Climate Change Act should be determined by the scientific evidence of what is needed. The 2020 target should be decided on the same basis, and not determined by what is politically convenient.

The Committee on Climate Change, set up to advise the Government, has produced two options for a 2020 target:

- **Intended target: 42% by 2020**
This is the target the Committee says should be adopted following a global deal on climate change
- **Interim target: 34% by 2020**
This is the target the Committee says should be used before a global deal is agreed

Scientific research, including new research by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research¹, shows that a **UK 2020 target of at least 42% is needed to give the best chance of avoiding dangerous climate change** (under the differentiated responsibilities set out in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). A weak 2020 target would mean larger cumulative emissions and increases the risk of not meeting the 80% 2050 target.

¹ Making a Climate Commitment: Analysis of the first Report (2008) of the UK Committee on Climate Change, The Tyndall Centre, University of Manchester, March 2009
http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/tyndall_climatereport_ccc2008.pdf

Even a 42% target may not ensure climate safety. The Committee on Climate Change says that a 42% target would equate to a 50% chance of a 2 degree temperature rise, just less than a 10% chance of 3 degrees and a 1% chance of 4 degrees. Over 2 degrees could leave a billion people without water. **Adopting the weaker interim 34% target would mean an unacceptably large chance of dangerous climate change.**

If the Government chooses the 34% option we will need to make **much bigger cuts** far faster after 2020. This will be far more costly down the line for reasons including:

- Early efficiency gains save money
- Innovation to reduce the price of low-carbon and more efficient technologies will have been slower
- The economy will be even more locked in to carbon-intensive infrastructure
- Extremely rapid forced cuts after 2020 are likely to damage the economy more

A strong 2020 target is vital to ensuring that the UK can successfully make the transition to a low-carbon economy. All the evidence compiled in reports including the Stern Review and the first Committee on Climate Change report indicates that the investment and innovation required to make the transition needs to accelerate immediately. Failure to do so would represent a serious threat to being able to achieve the 80% reduction by 2050 target.

Adopting the intended target once a global 'deal' has been achieved is risky. It is not clear that a 'deal' will be reached at Copenhagen in December. Business needs a clear investment framework. Already, the CBI is basing its modelling² on the assumption of a 30% carbon reduction by 2020, not the intended 42% target.

Why should the 42% target be met by domestic action?

The Committee on Climate Change has suggested that the intended target of 42% can be reached by buying in emissions cuts from other countries.

However, big economic gains would be made by achieving the 42% reduction target through taking action in this country. For example:

- a massive programme of home energy efficiency would help eradicate fuel poverty, cut household fuel bills, create hundreds of thousands of jobs, increase security of supply and cut actual UK emissions
- a step-change in investments in the power grid and renewable energy would not only create hundreds of thousands of jobs, increase security of supply and cut actual UK emissions but also give the UK an economic lead in the rapidly expanding international markets for low-carbon technologies

All of this would be undermined if the Government did not ensure that the UK carbon budgets and 2020 target led to emissions reductions within the UK. The evidence is that without a stretching target and commitment to making the emission cuts through domestic effort, many sectors are investing in 'business as

² Going the distance: the low-carbon economy roadmap, CBI, 6 April 2009 pp2
<http://climatechange.cbi.org.uk/reports/00172/>

usual' that locks the UK in to high-carbon infrastructure - such as building airport runways and unabated coal fired power stations.

The result of not adopting the 42% 2020 greenhouse gas emissions target achieved through domestic effort will be to significantly reduce action in the UK economy to prepare for the cuts needed post 2020. In practice it will mean foregoing timely investments in energy efficiency and low-carbon energy.

Why should Parliamentarians make the decision?

The Committee on Climate Change was established under the Climate Change Act to advise the Government on emissions targets, and to report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The committee is made up of experts from the fields of climate change, science and economics. This committee role was supported by all political parties.

However, the advice for 'intended' and 'interim' budgets, depending on an international 'deal' on climate change, is a proposal for a negotiating strategy in international talks. **Friends of the Earth believes that the political judgment about when to adopt the intended target, in relation to international negotiations, is a proper matter for parliamentarians to decide.**

One of the greatest strengths of the Climate Change Act is the vision and international leadership it shows. Adopting a 2020 target based on scientific evidence in advance of international climate talks is one of the most significant contributions the UK can make to international agreement on the emissions cuts needed to avoid dangerous climate change.

Why go beyond the Committee on Climate Change's advice?

Two major developments since the Committee on Climate Change published its advice on 1 December 2008 make it necessary and legitimate for the Government to go further than the Committee's recommendations.

Firstly the science has moved on. The Copenhagen scientific gathering on climate change brought together empirical evidence of a pace of climate decline far faster and more alarming than the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report was able to reflect. The conference emphasised the importance of a strong 2020 target in one of its 'key messages'³:

Weaker targets for 2020 increase the risk of crossing tipping points and make the task of meeting 2050 targets more difficult. Delay in initiating effective mitigation actions increases significantly the long-term social and economic costs of both adaptation and mitigation.

Even before this new evidence, the Committee itself said the 'interim' budget is inadequate to the task of tackling climate change. The Committee refers to the interim budget as "below the lowest level likely to be appropriate as the UK contribution to a required global trajectory"⁴.

³Climate Change, Global Risks, Challenges and decisions, May 2009
http://climatecongress.ku.dk/newsroom/congress_key_messages

⁴ Building a low-carbon economy - the UK's contribution to tackling climate change, Committee on Climate Change, 1 December 2008, pp113
<http://hmccc.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/TSO-ClimateChange.pdf>

Secondly the EU energy package, agreed after the Committee report, was significantly weaker on offsetting than the Committee had taken into account. Phase II of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme allows for a further 200 **MtCO₂** of non-EU credits. This is problematic because there is no cap on emissions from outside the EU and there can be no guarantee of 'additionality' in the cuts made in this way.

The Committee itself says "a policy of relying too much on purchased credits in the initial years could make a stretching 2050 domestic target unachievable and could cost the UK dearly by mid century given the likely high and rising cost of purchased credits"⁵. The Tyndall Report shows that, following the EU package, 27% of effort would be made through non-EU credits to reach the intended target.

Support for a strong 2020 target

There is strong public opinion for climate change targets based on science. Over 200,000 people wrote to or contacted their MP calling for an 80% 2050 target as part of the Big Ask campaign organised by Friends of the Earth. Now a 42% 2020 target should be adopted to meet the scale of the climate change challenge.

Early Day Motion 868, has been supported by 167 MPs from all parties including the Chair and members of the Environmental Audit Committee.

EDM 868: TARGETS FOR 2020 IN THE CLIMATE CHANGE ACT 2008

That this House welcomes the Climate Change Act (2008) as the world's first example of a government adopting a legally binding target based on the scientific evidence of the scale of greenhouse gas emissions reductions required to avoid dangerous climate change; welcomes the Committee on Climate Change's advice for an intended 42% 2020 target; believes adopting this target now would show continued international leadership on climate change legislation; calls on the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change to adopt an immediate target to cut greenhouse gas emissions within the UK by 42% by 2020.

What MPs can do to support a strong 2020 target

The 2020 target will be decided by MPs as part of Secondary Legislation following the Climate Change Act.

An announcement will be made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer alongside the Budget on 22 April 2009 outlining the Government's view on: the level of the first three carbon budgets; the 2020 target; and the proportion of cuts to be made in the UK.

Friends of the Earth urges MPs to **sign EDM 868 in advance of the announcement**. We hope the Government will take this into account when proposing the 2020 target and carbon budgets.

⁵ Building a low-carbon economy - the UK's contribution to tackling climate change, Committee on Climate Change, 1 December 2008, pp160

<http://hmccc.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/TSO-ClimateChange.pdf>

There will be an opportunity during **Oral Questions on Energy and Climate Change on 23 April** for MPs to raise questions. Friends of the Earth encourages MPs to raise points outlined in this briefing.

An affirmative resolution procedure vote will happen in both Houses before 1 June 2009. We hope MPs will support the resolution if the 2020 target and carbon budgets reflect the scale of the challenge.

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