



**Friends of
the Earth**

How to: tackle climate change

At the centre of Friends of the Earth's The Big Ask climate change campaign is a new Climate Change Bill. The bill would force governments to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 3 per cent a year, every year, until 2050. The approach builds on our previous successes in passing laws requiring an end to fuel poverty (Warm Homes Act 2000) and doorstep recycling for all (Household Waste Recycling Act 2004)

Briefly, the Climate Change Bill would:

- 1.** Set an annual target for CO₂ emissions to be cut by 3 per cent every year.
- 2.** Require the PM to report to Parliament annually on the Government's performance in meeting these legal targets.
- 3.** Set up mechanisms to keep the Government on target – ranging from new powers for Select Committees, to cuts in Ministers' salaries.

The bill cannot be passed overnight – it took four years to win the Warm Homes campaign and two to pass the doorstep recycling bill. This bill will be even harder to push through.

We need your support for the long haul ahead – hopefully this pull-out and the *Climate change action guide* and *Action kit* will provide you with the inspiration you'll need to succeed.

The Climate Change Bill

An annual target

The Prime Minister must ensure that emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in any year are below the target for that year. The target for 2010 shall be 126 MtC (20 per cent below 1990 level). Targets shall reduce by 3 per cent each year to 2050.

A requirement for a strategy to meet the targets, and annual reporting on progress

The Prime Minister must publish a strategy to meet the above targets, and report annually on progress. Parliament will debate and vote on the report. All figures will be verified by the National Audit Office.

Progressive measures to ensure the targets are met

If CO₂ emissions exceed their target, the Prime Minister must report on which policies fell short and why, and will be legally required to propose extra policies (or extensions to existing policies) in order to meet targets in future years.

If CO₂ emissions exceed the target by more than 5 per cent, Select Committees monitoring departments whose policies affect climate change (transport, environment, industry, treasury, public accounts, etc) can propose policies to cut CO₂ emissions. The Committee can then insist that these proposals are debated and voted on by Parliament.

If CO₂ emissions exceed the target by more than 10 per cent, the Prime Minister – and any Secretary of State whose department has not met the sector targets for which they were responsible – shall have his/her salary cut by 10 per cent.

MPs' reports on climate change

Every MP must publish an annual report to constituents showing how they have acted to prevent climate change, including the ways in which they have voted.

Why do we need a Climate Change Bill when...

Q. We know we have to tackle climate change – as do the politicians?

The problems of climate change are widely accepted. During the election run-up, all three parties admitted that climate change was a terrible threat and action was needed. All three parties supported tough long-term targets for cutting carbon dioxide emissions by 60 per cent by 2050.

“Climate change is **“the world’s greatest environmental challenge” and “so far-reaching in its impact and irreversible in its destructive power, that it alters radically human existence.”**

Tony Blair, 14 September 2004

“Climate change is one of mankind’s greatest challenges ... The urgency of global warming means that fine words are no longer enough. We need action.”

Michael Howard, 13 September 2004.

“Catastrophic climate change is the greatest man-made threat to the planet.”

Liberal Democrat manifesto

”

Q. We could campaign instead for the changes to transport, energy and housing policies that we need to see to tackle climate change?

1. Long-term targets are easily ignored by Ministers who generally leave them to a future government, prioritising immediate problems instead. Future governments then avoid meeting the target, claiming that previous governments had not acted decisively enough, making the target now unreachable. This process is common enough that such targets have their own acronym – NIMTO targets. A “Not In My Term of Office” target is one that Ministers know can be ignored.

2. Meeting the target in 2050 is not enough. If we rely on meeting targets with some miracle future technology of 2049 to cut emissions by 60 per cent overnight, it will be too late. If emissions stay the same until 2049 and then fall 60 per cent we will have emitted 10 billion tonnes of carbon by 2050 – every tonne of which will warm our climate. But if we cut emissions gradually between 2010 and 2050, total emissions will be about half this – closer to 6 billion tonnes.

The Climate Change Bill maps the necessary path that would prevent climate change becoming a runaway, unstoppable disaster. It ensures Ministers stick to that path well into the future. It must become law.



How to lobby your MP to get the bill made law

MPs are most responsive to pressure in their own constituencies. They are influenced by local media, by what their own party leaders are saying, and by their own attitudes and beliefs. But ultimately it is their constituents – the people who cast the votes – who can exert the most pressure to persuade them to support the Climate Change Bill – so we need you to create local interest in tackling climate change

We have made a good start. Just before the election, the bill was introduced to Parliament by three political heavyweights. Michael Meacher, John Gummer and Norman Baker have racked up 73 years in Parliament, 17 of them as their party spokesmen on the Environment. In this new Parliament, we expect these MPs to table a Commons' resolution, or Early Day Motion (EDM) that calls for their bill to be passed.

STEP 1 Get your MP to declare support for the bill

You can begin by asking your MP to sign the EDM – we will let you know the details of it as soon as we have them, and see <http://www.thebigask.com>

Some MPs refuse to sign EDMs for a variety of reasons. If your MP replies by saying that they are a “waste of time”, you should do two things:

- Check they are telling the truth. Many MPs who claim not to sign EDMs are not being truthful. Check on the website: <http://edm.ais.co.uk> or call our Parliamentary Unit on 020 7566 1722. If your MP is fibbing, then send a list of the EDMs s/he has signed, with a letter asking them to reconsider signing the climate change EDM.
- If they truthfully don't sign EDMs (this is usually the case for Ministers, but not for other MPs) then ask them to say whether or not they support the sentiments of the EDM because as a local voter you want to know their position.

STEP 2 Persuade your MP to make this bill a priority

Persuading your MP to declare support for the bill is a great start but for the bill to become law we need them to be deeply committed to it. It is not impossible that in the future we will face a crunch vote on the Climate Change Bill and your MP will be under pressure from his or her party whips to vote against it. If all they have done is signed an EDM four years earlier they may

buckle. But if we have managed to involve them deeply in the campaign for the bill; they have seen the full implications of climate change and spoken many times about the importance of this campaign, they might resist the whips.

Persuading your MP to sign the EDM is the start – not the end – of the process. You then need to encourage and help them to be committed.

STEP 3 Involve your MP in campaigning activities

- Involve your MP in mass events such as Days of Action or a Parliamentary Lobby to raise the issue of climate change. Try to organise a joint press release or a photo shoot so you and your MP can say how serious climate change is, and how important the bill is.
- Organise one-off events in your area, such as a public meeting on climate change to which your MP is invited to speak, a photo shoot at a local eco-house or renewable energy facility, or even your group helping your MP to cut their emissions by 3 per cent a year – which could lead to stories concerning progress.
- Draw your MP's attention to external events. Details of a flood, a new piece of research or the publication of new figures on emissions could all be sent to your MP with an explanation of the relevance to the campaign. If the information is newsworthy, you could suggest your MP turns it into a press release or writes about it in his/her column in the local paper.

STEP **4** Spread the word about The Big Ask campaign

The Big Ask campaign is about asking difficult questions on climate change, energy and political will and about demanding truthful answers. Visit <http://www.thebigask.com> to keep up-to-date concerning campaign progress, to find out how to write to your MP, and to join The Big Ask email list.

With each of these steps, your MP becomes more involved, more informed, and more committed to the Climate Change Bill. Imagine how miserable you would feel in four years' time if your MP rats on his promise to support this bill. Put yourself in that position and consider all the things you would be wishing you had done.

Now all you have to do is act...



How to deal with MPs who won't support the Climate Change Bill

Try to establish if your MP opposes the bill because:

- they don't believe climate change is happening;
- they agree with taking action to stop climate change but do not support the specific targets in the bill; or
- they support the targets, but believe the mechanisms and legal structure of the bill are flawed in some way.

If they are a climate sceptic, you may have your work cut out. But the weight of scientific evidence is now overwhelming, and you should point this out to your MP and update them whenever a new study is released. We can help with briefing.

If they do accept we need to act, but do not agree with the 3 per cent annual target in the bill, ask how much carbon dioxide they think it is safe for us to emit. Ask them how they believe we should keep emissions below this limit – and what is the scientific basis of them thinking that this is acceptable?

Your MP may accept the target, but claim that policies are in place that will lead to us getting there anyway, and the bill is too heavy-handed. Tell them that history suggests otherwise – emissions have risen since 1997 despite endless pledges of cuts. And even if your MP has confidence in the current Government to deliver 3 per cent cuts each year, are they as confident in the next, or next but one (or even next but 13) governments? The Climate Change Bill would bind governments for the 40 years that we need to be reducing emissions.

Final thoughts

We are here to help you lobby your MP – if you have any questions please call us on 020 7566 1722.

To help effectively, we need to know what MPs are saying – so please send copies of all correspondence from your MP to Martyn Williams at martynw@foe.co.uk, or 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ.

Good luck!