

# Media Briefing

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## The Climate Change Bill

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### The Climate Change Law

Friends of the Earth has led the campaign for a strong Climate Change Law through its campaign The Big Ask. Since it was launched in May 2005 over 200,000 people have taken action in support of The Big Ask campaign – contacting virtually every MP in the country to ask for their support. Thanks to the individual actions of all these people, a Climate Change Law will be introduced in November this year – making the UK the first country in the world to commit to legally binding cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

The law will ensure this and future governments deliver real cuts in emissions and that all government departments will have to take account of the climate impacts of policy decisions. It will also send a strong signal to the rest of the world that the UK is serious about tackling climate change – putting it in a strong position in international climate negotiations.

The law will also give business and investors the confidence they need to make long term investments in climate-friendly technologies. Fifty seven per cent of FTSE 100 and 250 companies surveyed for Friends of the Earth said they believed the proposed law will give UK businesses and investors the confidence they need to invest in low carbon technologies. Half of companies that expressed a view said they believe the law will give UK business a competitive advantage in the global marketplace by making Britain one of the first low carbon economies in the world.

The law will set a framework of incremental targets to gradually reduce emissions. These will be measured in five-year budget periods which will place a limit on the amount of greenhouse gases the UK can release into the atmosphere during each period. Annual target ranges will also be set as a way of ensuring the UK stays on track to meet its five year budget.

This means all governments will be accountable for their record on cutting emissions. It also means the UK will gradually cut its emissions over time rather than waiting until the last minute to act. Carbon dioxide stays in the atmosphere for an average of 100 years – so the earlier we begin cutting emissions the better.

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The law will set up an independent Climate Change Committee. The committee will provide a transparent and independent way of setting greenhouse gas budgets and annual target ranges and of reviewing progress on the Bill.

### **Next Steps: Implementing the Climate Change Law**

The House of Commons will debate and vote on the Climate Change Bill on 28 October 2008. It will return to the House of Lords shortly afterwards. The Bill is expected to become law in November. On 1 December 2008, the Climate Change Committee must offer formal advice on how much carbon dioxide the UK can emit during the first three "greenhouse gas budgets" - each lasting five years. The Government will then examine this advice and set the budgets in March 2009 - at the same time as the financial budget.

From that point on, greenhouse gas emissions will be scrutinised through an annual cycle of reports. Each spring, the UK's greenhouse gas emissions will be announced. In the summer, the Climate Change Committee will then assess these figures and report back on whether the Government is on track to meet its five year carbon budget. In autumn, the Government will respond to this progress report, proposing any policy changes that may be necessary. A further report will take place at the end of each five year budget determining whether the budget was met or not.

The Climate Change Committee also has a brief to examine the latest climate science and, if necessary, suggest changes to targets or budgets. It can also be asked by Government to study specific questions, and must be consulted before key policy decisions are made by Government. The Climate Change Bill is designed to set up this process - it does not cover the policies needed to meet the targets and budgets. It is of course vital that Government gets these policies right.

### **How the Climate Change Law will affect Government policy**

Once the Climate Change Bill is made law the Government will need to reassess its climate change strategy to ensure it can deliver the reductions in emissions that are needed. Friends of the Earth believes this will require action in four key areas:

- Launch of an Apollo-style programme that will make renewable energy the number one energy source in the UK;
- Launch a massive drive for energy efficiency including doubling the energy efficiency of every home in the UK;
- Give local government the duties, powers and resources to make dramatic cuts in carbon emissions at the local level;
- Shelve plans to expand UK airports and build new coal-fired power stations unless they capture and store their emissions.

### **How the Climate Change Law will affect our lives**

Cutting emissions by 80 per cent will change the UK – often for the better. Some of the changes we could experience are outlined below:

#### **Year 2010:**

Sales of energy efficient appliances and smaller energy efficient cars will soar while energy inefficient products, such as incandescent light bulbs, will disappear from our shelves.

More and more households will start generating their own electricity and heat from micro-renewables - for example through roof-mounted solar panels. The Government will have started to implement a national plan to super-insulate every home in the UK.

There will be less waste to go in the bin as manufacturers cut down on packaging. Regular doorstep collections will make recycling easy. Food waste will be collected separately and composted.

#### **Year 2030:**

Carbon dioxide emissions from any remaining coal and gas power stations will be captured and stored in old gas and oil fields.

Energy demand from households and businesses will have been reduced by half.

Travel around the UK and around Europe will be by larger trains as air travel will be largely reserved for long haul flights. There will 10 per cent fewer cars on the roads, city centres will be largely car free and public transport systems will have been transformed, with more buses and trains and services linked up to make journeys easier, quicker and more pleasant.

#### **Year 2050:**

Carbon emissions will have been reduced to almost zero.

All our energy demand will come from renewable energy sources such as the wind, sun, tides and waves. The thriving renewable energy industry in the UK will provide millions of jobs and form basis of a dynamic low carbon economy.

Hydrogen, produced from renewable energy sources or fossil fuels, will account for about a quarter of total energy use. Hydrogen fuel cells in homes will provide heat and electricity and multi-fuel filling stations will have replaced petrol stations to provide cars with hydrogen and electricity.

### **The history of the Climate Change Law**

Frustrated by the Government's failure to deliver on its promises to tackle climate change emissions, Friends of the Earth launched The Big Ask campaign to call for a Climate Change Bill setting binding targets for emissions reductions.

#### **2005**

**7 April** - Friends of the Earth drafts a Climate Change Bill which would commit the UK to annual emissions reductions of three per cent - equivalent to an 80 per cent cut by 2050. The Bill is submitted to Parliament by a cross-party group of MPs.

**25 May** - The Big Ask campaign is launched by Friends of the Earth and Radiohead front man Thom Yorke. A parliamentary petition (Early Day Motion 178) is opened calling for new legislation requiring "annual cuts in carbon dioxide emissions of three per cent".

**13 July** - Friends of the Earth helps form a new coalition, Stop Climate Chaos, calling for a new climate law with annual carbon dioxide cuts.

#### **2006**

**1 May** - Radiohead's Thom Yorke headlines The Big Ask Live concert in London – one of a series of gigs organised in support of the campaign. The event is attended by David Miliband – who subsequently became Secretary of State for the Environment – and the Conservative leader David Cameron. A TNS survey reveals that three quarters of the population would support a new law requiring annual cuts in carbon emissions.

**1 September** - David Cameron adds his support to the campaign and calls for a Climate Change Bill to be included in the next Queen's Speech. The Conservatives publish their own Climate Change Bill. By the middle of September 620 MPs (out of a total of 646) have been visited by constituents asking them to support the campaign for a strong Climate Change Law.

**15 September** - Friends of the Earth and the Cooperative Bank commission the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research to produce the UK's first roadmap to a low carbon economy. The research sets a carbon budget for the UK, outlines what the Government needs to do, and by when, to meet it, and maps out how the UK will change as a result.

**12 October** - David Miliband indicates that the Government will introduce legislation to tackle climate change. By now 412 out of 646 MPs have signed a parliamentary petition (Early Day Motion 178) - sixty four per cent of all MPs and a majority in every party sitting in Parliament. Only three other Early Day Motions had ever been signed by more than 400 MPs.

**15 November** - The Government announces in the Queen's Speech that it will introduce a new Climate Change Law.

## **2007**

**13 March** - The Government publishes its draft Climate Change Bill. Friends of the Earth welcomes the move but calls for the Bill to be strengthened.

**4 July** - Friends of the Earth launches The Big Ask online march which allows people to lobby their MP from the comfort of their computer terminals by sending a video message to direct to their MP. The march is supported by Jude Law, James Blunt and Razorlight's Johnny Borrell.

**24 September** - Gordon Brown, in his first speech to Labour Party Conference as Prime Minister, announces that he will ask the Climate Change Committee to report on whether the overall target for emissions reductions in the Bill should be increased from 60 per cent. By this stage 119 MPs, including David Miliband, David Cameron, Sir Menzies Campbell and Ken Livingstone, have attended public meetings and events on the Climate Change Bill.

**29 October** - Hilary Benn announces that he will ask the Climate Change Committee to look at whether the Bill should cover emissions from international aviation and shipping.

## **2008**

**14 November** - The House of Lords debates the Climate Change Bill for the first time.

**18 February** - Hilary Benn announces that the Climate Change Bill will set annual target ranges for emissions reductions, ensuring the UK stays on track to meet its long term target.

**27 February** - The Big Ask launches in 17 countries across Europe calling on national governments and the European Union commit to annual cuts in carbon dioxide emissions.

**27 May** - Razorlight play a one-off gig in front of a commercial jet at London's Science Museum to highlight the need for emissions from international shipping and aviation to be included in the law. A cross party group of MPs form a band - The Aviators - especially for the occasion, who play in support.

**9 June** – The Bill begins its journey through the Commons. In an unprecedented move over 80 backbench Labour MPs challenge the party line by signing their support for amendments that would strengthen the Bill by increasing the overall target for cutting emissions to 80 per cent by 2050 and including emissions from international aviation and shipping.

**23 September** - Gordon Brown announces to Labour Party Conference that he will ask the Climate Change Committee to report in October on whether the target for cutting emissions in the Bill should be increased to 80 per cent.

**7 October** -The Climate Change Committee publishes its advice calling for an 80 per cent cut in emissions to apply to all sectors of the UK economy, including international aviation and shipping. Sixty eight labour back benchers sign Early day Motion 2233 calling for the Government to implement the Climate Change Committee's advice.

**16 October** - Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, announces that the Government will increase the target for cutting emissions from 60 to 80 per cent.

### **The Climate Change Law in numbers**

- The UK will be the **1<sup>st</sup>** country in the world to set legally binding limit on greenhouse gas emissions.
- The law will commit the UK to cut its emissions by **80** per cent.
- More than **200,000** people have lobbied their MP about the law,
- It has taken **42** months to deliver the law – from the launch of The Big Ask in May 2005,
- **2** Prime Ministers and **4** Secretaries of State (Margaret Beckett, David Miliband, Hilary Benn and Ed Miliband) have overseen the introduction of the law,
- More than **400** of MPs have signed **3** parliamentary petitions (Early Day Motions) in support of a strong climate change law,
- **1,922** people volunteered to send a postcard about the law to their MP in just **3** hours at Radiohead gig this June.

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