



UK Health Alliance
on Climate Change

A photograph of a park scene with several people cycling and jogging. In the foreground, a group of cyclists is riding towards the camera. One cyclist on the left wears a bright green helmet and a black jacket. Next to him is another cyclist in a grey shirt and black shorts. Further right, a man in a black jacket and a man in a grey jacket are also cycling. On the far right, a man in a blue t-shirt is riding a blue 'citibike'. In the background, several people are jogging along a path. The scene is set in a lush green park with many trees and bushes.

Our manifesto for the UK General Election

Five priorities to sustain
our health, health and care
services, and environment

<https://ukhealthalliance.org>



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Five priorities to sustain our health, health and care services, and environment

The climate and nature crisis is a public health emergency that needs an urgent response. Our manifesto for the next general election presents five priorities for the new government to sustain our health, health and care services, and environment. We ask that parties incorporate these commitments into their manifestos.

- 1 End fossil-fuel dependency
- 2 Ensure a healthy environment
- 3 Transform the food system

- 4 Meet international commitments
- 5 Transform health and care services

The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change is an alliance of 46 UK-based health organisations with a shared vision for a just, sustainable healthy world. Our members membership represents about one million health professionals. Collectively, we advocate for just responses to the climate and ecological crisis, promote the health benefits that flow from those responses, and empower health organisations and individuals to make changes to response to the crisis.

Find out more: <https://ukhealthalliance.org>

Contact us: info@ukhealthalliance.org

1 End fossil-fuel dependency

The burning of fossil fuels is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, the main cause of climate change. It is a major contributor to air pollution, which kills about 43,000 people a year in the UK, and rising temperatures, which are leading to heatwaves, extreme storms, floods, wildfires, extension of infectious disease, forced migration, and harm to mental health. Every increase in temperature makes these problems worse, reduces our capacity to respond, and makes shortages of food and water more likely.

The UK is legally bound to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 78% from 1990 levels by 2035, which will require a rapid decarbonisation of energy supply. The UK is not on track to reach its targets and is falling behind with increasing the supply of renewable energy.

Fossil –fuel dependency makes people vulnerable to fluctuating energy prices, forcing some into fuel poverty.

UKHACC calls for:

- A rapid, just transition to clean energy, meaning that everyone benefits from the transition
- Elimination of government subsidies, investments, and new licences for fossil fuel exploration, extraction, and sales
- Increased investment in and subsidies for renewable energy
- Policies that reduce energy demand, including insulation of homes and public buildings and improved public transport

2 Ensure a healthy environment

Good health depends on a healthy environment, which means affordable, safe and environmentally friendly housing, good access to public transport, environments that make walking and cycling the best way to travel, clean air, and easy access to green and blue spaces. Most people in the UK do not live in places that meet all these requirements. This has a major impact on their health and well-being and on their ability to maximise their potential.

UKHACC calls for:

- Affordable, environmentally-friendly housing for all
- Improved, affordable public transport
- Planning that makes walking and cycling easy and safe
- Access to green spaces for everybody within a 15-minute walk of their home
- Protected waterways and improved access to safe blue space

3 Transform the food system

A third of global greenhouse gas emissions result from the food system. Agriculture accounts for a tenth of the UK's emissions. Red meat and dairy accounts for about three quarters of emissions related to food.

The food system is the main driver of biodiversity loss through destruction of natural environments and the heavy use of fertilisers, pesticides, and energy.

About 42,000 deaths a year in the UK are associated with consumption of dairy and red and processed meat, and about 70,000 with insufficient intake of fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Healthy food is nearly three times more expensive than unhealthy products.

In the UK 9.5 million tonnes of food are thrown away every year.

The UK imports about half of its food, making it vulnerable to the impact of climate change on supply lines.

UKHACC calls for:

- A public awareness campaign promoting healthy diets high in plant-based foods, reduced consumption of red and processed meat and dairy products, and a reduction in waste
- Support for farmers to transition to sustainable practices through subsidies and regulation of the local food sector
- Healthy food to be readily available and affordable

4 Meet international commitments

Harm from the climate and nature crisis falls most heavily on those poorer countries and communities that have contributed least to the problem. Yet, no country, no matter how wealthy, can shield itself from these impacts. A global response is needed, and wealthier countries like the UK must provide financial and technical support to poorer countries. It is in their self-interest.

Allowing the consequences to fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable will breed more conflict, food insecurity, forced displacement, and zoonotic disease—with severe implications for all countries and communities.

In 2019 the UK committed to deliver £11.6bn in international climate finance over five years, including £3bn to support nature and biodiversity, but it is not on track to deliver its financial commitments.

UKHACC calls for:

- The UK to meet existing financial commitments
- Develop innovative ways to increase financial investments to support climate and ecological action through public/private sector partnerships

5 Transform health and care services

The health services in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland account for about 5% of the UK's emissions and 40% of all public sector emissions. They are legally committed to reach carbon net zero by 2040/45. Health and care services are also a major source of waste and pollution of rivers and seas.

Social care has not had the same environmental attention as health services.

Transformation of health and care services will be needed and can be achieved only with commitment from politicians and the leadership of services, improved governance, investment in staff, capital investment, and annual public reporting of the carbon footprint of each service.

The effects of the climate and nature crisis are already here and set to grow worse, making adaptation important, but health and care services have had insufficient support to develop resilience and adapt for the future.

Health and care services interact with millions of people every day, are the biggest employers in the UK, and major purchasers of products and services. This gives them great power to drive the cultural and societal shift needed to secure a healthier, more sustainable way of life.

UKHACC calls for:

- Significant investment in public health and integration with health and care services to benefit health, care, and the environment. Policies are needed to promote clean air, active travel, healthy diets, and easy access to green and blue spaces to prevent ill health and reduce pressures on health and care services

- Improved access and use of green space on the NHS estates
- Funding for green social prescribing
- Funding of and appointment of staff throughout health and social care to lead on decarbonisation
- Capital investment to decarbonise health and social care buildings and estates
- Acceleration of the zero-emissions ambulance fleet from the current goal of 2036 to 2030
- Plans to dramatically reduce waste from care services, including avoiding single-use items wherever possible
- Increased attention to adapting community health and care services to the effects of the climate and nature crisis
- Healthy largely plant-based foods for all patients and staff in care settings
- Annual audited public reporting of the carbon footprint of community health and care services
- Policies to drive the cultural and societal shift needed to secure a healthier, more sustainable way of life