

Climate leadership: UK and US compared

“green alliance...”



The UK has historically outpaced the US on climate action

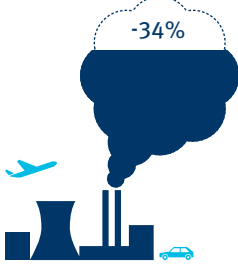
Climate targets

The UK has set tougher emissions reduction targets.

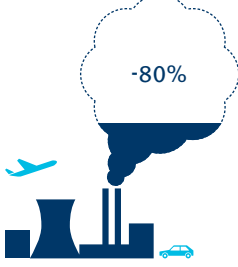
UK

US

By 2020 (against a 1990 baseline)



By 2050 (against a 1990 baseline)



Carbon emissions

UK carbon emissions are lower than those of the US and have fallen faster.

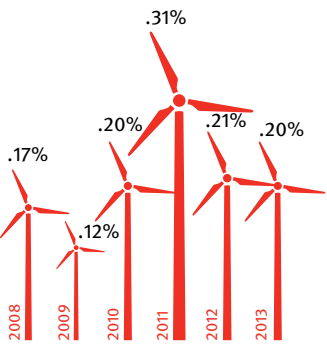
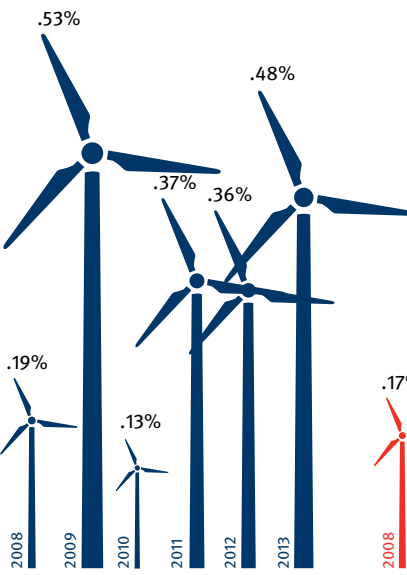
Per capita emissions in 2013



Renewables investment

The UK has reaped the rewards of its climate leadership, attracting more investment in renewables.

Renewables investment as a proportion of GDP



But the US is now acting

Leadership on new coal

The US has caught up with the UK on banning new, unabated coal-fired power plants. Both countries are now world leaders on new coal restrictions.



No unabated coal-fired power plants from 2009



No unabated coal-fired power plants from 2013

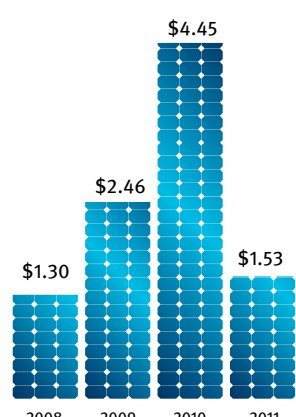
In fact, the US is now ahead of the UK in some areas

Renewables RD&D

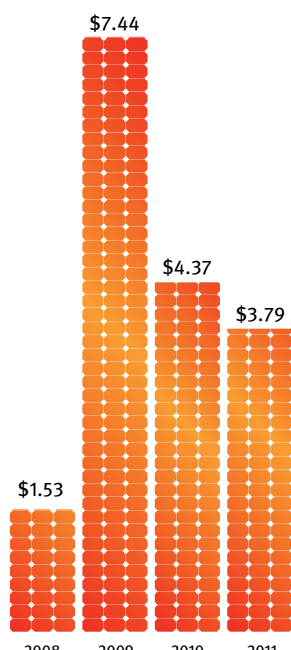
US investment in renewables research, development and deployment (RD&D) is outstripping the UK, paving the way for future renewables growth.

UK

Per capita investment



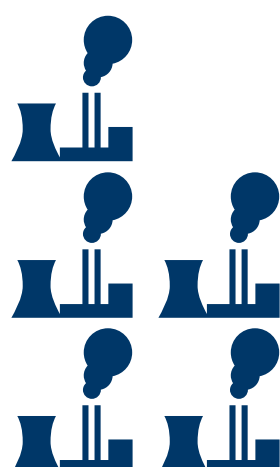
US



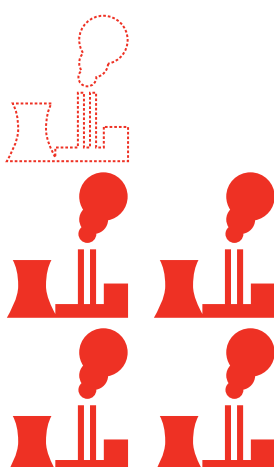
Cutting coal emissions

The US has clamped down harder than the UK on existing coal-fired power plants.

Rules explicitly protect old coal-fired power plants



Rules mean 1 in 5 coal-fired power plants are likely to shut by 2020



Climate statements

The US administration has been much more vocal on climate since 2010.

Prime Minister David Cameron

1 speech



“Climate change is not just a threat to the environment. It is also a threat to our national security, to global security, to poverty eradication and to economic prosperity.”

President Barack Obama

3 speeches



“The climate is changing faster than our efforts to address it. The alarm bells keep ringing. Our citizens keep marching. We cannot pretend we do not hear them. We have to answer the call.”

UK foreign secretary

1 speech



4 press statements



“A two degree increase in the world’s temperature would be dangerous, and four degrees would be catastrophic... Governments everywhere have to act.”
William Hague, press statement, 31 March 2014

US secretary of state

7 speeches



5 press statements, 1 op-ed

“Either we set an example for the world, or the world will make an example out of us.”
John Kerry, op-ed for *Think Progress*, 19 July 2013

The UK has been a world leader in setting carbon targets and curbing CO₂ emissions, and it has been at the cutting edge of climate diplomacy. It has benefited, attracting low carbon investment and global prestige. Its policies have been copied across the world.

In contrast, the US has had high CO₂ emissions and low interest in climate diplomacy.

However, over the past four years the balance has shifted. The Obama administration has introduced policy to restrain emissions at home, and climate is now a diplomatic priority.

The US’s actions are a vindication of the UK’s earlier climate leadership. But the UK has lost momentum in recent years. There is a risk that the global deal being negotiated in Paris in 2015 could become a bilateral agreement between the US and China, with the UK and the EU left out.

Climate multilateralism has been good for the UK, and continuing this approach will make a global climate deal more politically durable. The UK should renew its climate statesmanship in partnership with the US. Doing so would underpin the UK’s own domestic strategy and reinforce its influence within the EU and the UN.

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For sources and references see:
www.green-alliance.org.uk/
USvsUK_sources

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