Briefing

# How much action is actually in the UK's Methane Action Plan?

November 2025


## Summary

Fast action on methane emissions is the best 'climate emergency brake' there is to slow global warming. The UK is now a champion of the Global Methane Pledge, and the government has just published a dedicated Methane Action Plan (MAP).[1] Countries are asked to produce plans or roadmaps when they join the Global Methane Pledge, and Green Alliance has been advocating for one since 2022.[2]

The UK's new MAP is a welcome move to enhance global attention on this crucial issue at COP30. It rightly highlights the importance of urgent action and the part the UK can play in the world succeeding in achieving the pledge's goal. It is a positive step forward, with new promises of progress on landfill methane capture and international fossil fuel standards. It should unite government departments in acting on short term wins that will reduce methane emissions, while at the same time cutting air pollution and waste.

Nevertheless, the level of ambition in this plan is similar to that of the previous government, with the increase from 19 per cent methane reductions between 2020 and 2030 to 22 per cent coming mostly from changes to the baseline projection, rather than any new interventions. This highlights a missed opportunity to ramp up the UK's ambition to tackle methane emissions.

The publication of the MAP is not the end of the story; the government must now deliver on its existing promises, whilst developing and implementing options for further impact, especially in the agriculture and energy sectors. The UK has to lead by example to retain its position as a global climate leader and encourage other countries to accelerate their action.


## Why methane matters

Methane is responsible for around a third of global warming to date. It is over 80 times more potent than $CO_2$ at trapping heat over a 20 year period but it breaks down far more quickly. As a result, urgently cutting methane emissions can play an outsized role in tackling the climate emergency in the short term, buying time for other emissions cuts to take effect. But this 'emergency brake' will only work if the action is taken by 2030. Delaying methane emissions cuts, for example as part of longer term carbon budget planning, will be much less effective, and it risks the world hitting dangerous climate tipping points in the meantime.[3]

## UK methane reduction

Between 1990 and 2020, the UK successfully cut methane emissions by a hugely significant 62 per cent, largely due to the closure of coal mines and coal power stations.

But progress has stalled since, and our analysis of previous UK climate plans showed they would only result in, at most, a 19 per cent reduction in methane emissions between 2020 and 2030.[4] This new plan is a small improvement on that, with 22 per cent of methane emissions reductions identified between 2020 and 2030, but without any new domestic policies.

The government wants the UK to be a global leader on climate action. Becoming an official champion of the Global Methane Pledge with an associated MAP, and co-chairing the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, are welcome demonstrations of this.

Keeping global temperatures below the Paris climate agreement's higher goal of 2°C will require continued global co-operation and widespread ambition. In the face of wavering commitments around the world, especially from the US, it is imperative that the UK leads the way and encourages other countries to follow. Other countries have set out more ambitious methane reduction targets via their plans for 2020 to 2030, eg the EU's is 23 per cent, Canada's is 35 per cent and Nigeria's is 42 per cent.[5]

## Positive ambition in the new plan

COP30 in Brazil is a make or break moment for the success of the Global Methane Pledge. In this context, the government's MAP is welcome. It highlights the imperative for urgent action, and the ability for methane cuts to act as the 'climate emergency brake'. It encourages other countries to step up their ambitions and publish their own plans.

The UK's plan includes all the policy ambitions set out by the previous government, as well as new areas of focus, all of which we recommended in our previous report.[6]

- **Agriculture:** we welcome the continued commitment to mandate methane suppressing feed additives on all suitable farms by 2030, despite the recent conspiracist backlash. There is also mention of innovation in livestock genetics and selective breeding to reduce methane emissions, and an intention to improve environmental regulations which should result in less methane leakage from crop-fed anaerobic digestion plants.
- **Waste:** the government continues to work towards diverting all biodegradable waste from businesses and households away from landfills. It has also promised to increase methane capture at landfill sites through a new, long term incentive scheme. This announcement is critical to prevent methane emissions rising in the short term.[7]
- **Energy:** the desire to end routine flaring and venting by 2030 remains in place, with work ongoing through the regulator to enforce it. The

government's new commitment to address emissions from imported fossil fuels puts the UK in a good position to join a leading coalition of importers, including the EU, Japan and South Korea, in developing a global methane standard for all fossil fuel production.

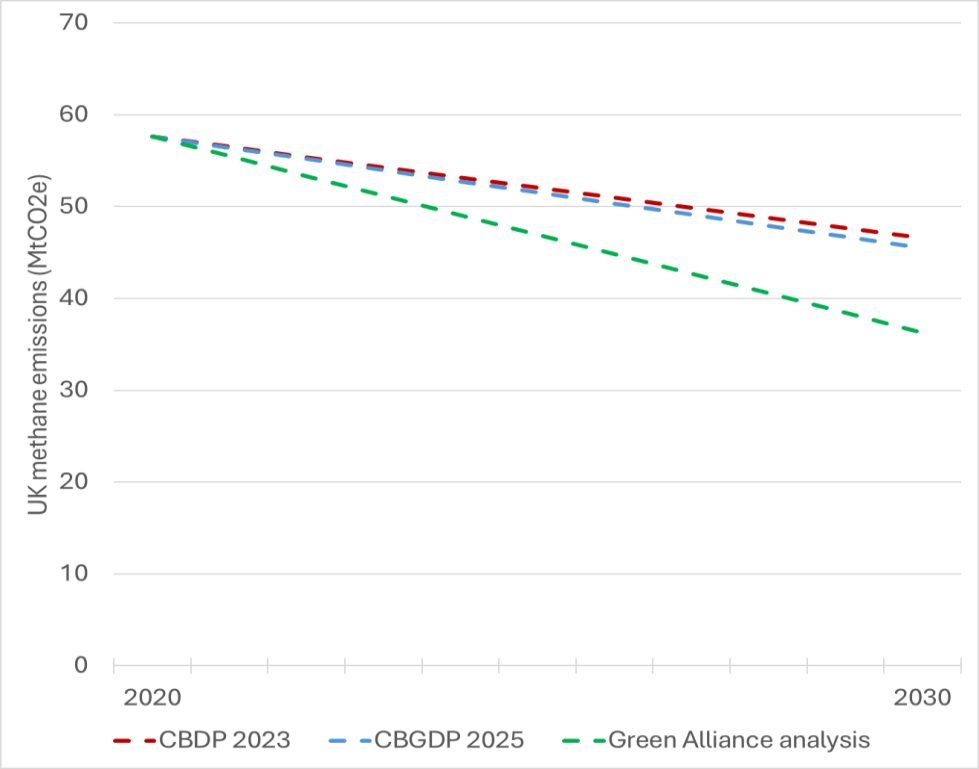
## Room for improvement

The government estimates that it will see methane emissions fall by around 450kt of methane from 2020 to 2030, which is a 22 per cent reduction.[8] But detailed analysis of the methane related policies in the government's Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan show they add up to a 21 per cent reduction.[9]

This is only marginally more than the previous government's plans, which we estimated would have resulted in a 19 per cent reduction. Since no new quantified policies are proposed, this appearance of higher ambition is simply the result of a better baseline of expected reductions from past actions. There is time to do more before 2030 to increase this ambition.

For the Global Methane Pledge to succeed, we have previously shown that all countries signed up, and China, need to see average methane emission reductions of over 40 per cent in the same period.[10] Our analysis shows how the UK could reach 37 per cent reduction in methane emissions by 2030 from a 2020 baseline with cost effective and only slightly more ambitious actions.[11]

**Projected reduction in UK methane emissions from 2020 to 2030, under the 2023 Carbon Budget Delivery Plan and the 2025 Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan, compared to our analysis of potential**



The new promise to incentivise higher rates of landfill gas capture, outlined in the MAP, is likely to lead to significant further cuts, but this hasn't been quantified in the MAP or the Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan.

Further opportunities, with significant co-benefits, outlined in detail in our previous analysis, include:[12]

- **Agriculture**. The profitable capture of biomethane directly from slurry stores, for use elsewhere on farms, for example, is a clear opportunity to improve circularity, cut emissions, reduce rural air pollution and cut farmers' costs. Further methane savings can be made through a shift to healthier diets, in line with the NHS's recommended level of consumption of red meat and eating more alternative proteins. This should be accompanied by a change in livestock numbers, with supportive policies for farmers through the transition.
- **Energy**. Requiring all fossil fuel operators to detect and repair gas leaks on a frequent basis would cut emissions and waste, bringing more gas to market and increasing tax income for the Treasury. This would also reduce harmful ozone air pollution from onshore oil wells and refineries.

## Conclusion

We give the new MAP six out of ten for its level of ambition. The government scores points simply for producing it, as it makes the Global Methane Pledge's success more likely and will encourage other countries to do more.

While much of the plan's substance is not new, its promises of progress on landfill methane capture and international fossil fuel standards are important improvements.

However, it loses points because of the missed opportunities to cut agricultural methane emissions with better slurry management, and in the oil and gas sector through better leak detection and repair regulations. These would offer significantly higher methane reductions to mitigate climate change, and provide economic and social co-benefits.

The government must not continue to overlook the value of these actions, and should work to implement additional measures before 2030.

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## Endnotes

[1] Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), 29 October 2025, 'UK Methane Action Plan'

[2] L Hardy and D Benton, November 2022, *The Global Methane Pledge: how the UK can meet its commitment*, Green Alliance

[3] L Hardy and D Benton, November 2023, 'Why the UK should do more to cut methane emissions', Green Alliance

[4] Ibid

[5] The Climate and Clean Air Coalition holds a repository of country plans at ccacoalition.org/resources/national-methane-action-plans

[6] R Allen, M Dunn and L Hardy, May 2025, *The climate emergency brake: an ambitious plan to cut UK methane emissions,* Green Alliance

[7] L Hardy, May 2025, briefing, 'Landfill methane emissions: the impact of losing the renewable electricity subsidy', Green Alliance

[8] Using the government's forecast that methane emissions will reduce by 12.7Mt$CO_2$e between 2020 and 2030 (page 6 of the Methane Action Plan) we converted this to methane ($CH_4$) using the 100-year Global Warming Potential of 28. The resulting figure, 450kt$CH_4$, is then compared to the UK's 2020 methane emissions of around 2050kt$CH_4$.

[9] Actions primarily relating to reducing methane emissions were identified in table 4 of the Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan, (DESNZ, 29 October 2025). These are actions 1, 2, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 22, 23, 26, 28, 80, 87, 89, 164, 166, 167 and 168. An adjustment was included for savings from devolved nations for both waste and agriculture measures (actions 32 and 169) based on the fraction of total $CO_2$e savings within each sector that are primarily methane related. A total of 7.2 Mt$CO_2$e per year is projected as a result of these actions, during the fifth carbon budget period (2028-2032), which we assume is broadly equivalent to the impact in 2030. This number is added to the expected savings under the 'baseline' scenario of 4.9Mt$CO_2$e. This is calculated using: DESNZ, 'Energy and emissions projections: 2023 to 2050', annex C: 'Non carbon dioxide emissions by IPCC category'. Total savings by 2030 are then 12.1Mt$CO_2$e or a 21 per cent reduction in emissions compared to 2020. This differs slightly from the 12.7MtCO2e outlined in the Methane Action Plan.

[10] L Hardy and D Benton, November 2023, op cit

[11] R Allen, M Dunn and L Hardy, May 2025, op cit

[12] Ibid