

The Rt Hon Emma Reynolds MP,
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
The Rt Hon Steve Reed MP,
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
The Rt Hon James Murray MP,
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP,
Secretary of State for Education
Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP,
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

10 July 2026

Dear Secretaries of State,

We are writing to express our worry about the current state of heat preparedness across the country. The country is already enduring its third heatwave of the year, with temperatures forecast to [reach 34-35°C](#) in parts of the country this weekend, yet our housing, infrastructure and public services remain ill-equipped to cope. This is harming people here and now.

The scale of impacts unfolding should be a wakeup call. We are struggling to cope with current climate impacts and yet every additional fraction of a degree of warming will increase the risks. **The need to transition away from fossil fuels and reach net zero, as well as prepare for climate impacts, has never been clearer.**

[The UK was built for a climate that no longer exists](#)

We urgently need to prepare for a new reality in the UK. In the CCC's recent [Well-Adapted UK Report](#), heat was cited as one of the highest priorities. Their projections show that, by the middle of the century, heatwaves could see 92% of existing homes overheat. This poses a serious threat to health and wellbeing, with almost 3,000 people suffering from heat related deaths across England in 2022. This could rise to 10,000 a year across the UK by 2050.

Productivity losses caused by extreme heat are high, with an [estimated](#) 11 million labour hours lost due to high heat exposure in 2022. It is also a major security concern, as heatwaves threaten critical national infrastructure, including transport and power systems and increase pressure on food and water systems. Without greater resilience, the foundations needed for UK security will struggle to function.

Current efforts, outlined in the National Adaptation Programme (NAP) published in 2023, fall short of meeting this challenge. While the next iteration, NAP4, must significantly raise ambition in this area, urgent action cannot be deferred until its publication in 2028. **A systemic nationwide approach to tackling overheating in housing and public buildings is critical.**

[These impacts are not experienced equally](#)

How, and to what degree, extreme heat is experienced reflects existing inequalities and inaction risks entrenching this further. Renters, low income households and ethnic minority groups are significantly more [exposed to extreme heat](#). Nearly half of the poorest fifth of English households live in homes liable to get too hot, which is three times as many as among the richest fifth. Outdoor workers are also increasingly exposed, bearing the brunt of [productivity losses](#). The health impacts of heatwaves are disproportionately felt by older age groups and those with disabilities. Extreme heat can also have detrimental effects on children's health. **Cool public spaces and worker protections are urgently needed to protect the most at risk.**

Government action is needed to improve the country's extreme heat preparedness. This should include:

- **Delivering an ambitious cooling strategy.** The government needs to urgently prepare communities for rising temperatures. It should increase urban green space coverage, including tree planting and the protection of mature trees to increase shading. It should pursue passive cooling measures, including shutters and shading devices to effectively regulate building temperatures.
- **Promoting active cooling,** such as reversible heat pumps, where take up of available support is very low, and air conditioning – starting with the most at risk. The rollout of air conditioning, paired with solar energy across public buildings such as schools, hospitals and care homes is essential to protect lives.
- **Setting maximum temperature thresholds,** whereby employers are responsible for changing workplace practices, technologies or other provisions to protect their workforces.
- **Implementing a national network of accessible cool spaces.** Existing community buildings, such as libraries and community centres should be better utilised and should meet a genuine cooling standard, following the [GLA's model](#). These may be lifesaving spaces for people most at risk whose homes are not equipped to cope in heatwaves.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations with you further.

Yours sincerely,

Blanche Shackleton, interim executive director, Green Alliance

Simon Francis, Coordinator, End Fuel Poverty Coalition

Asad Rehman, Chief Executive, Friends of the Earth England Wales and Northern Ireland

Areeba Hamid, Co-Exec Director, Greenpeace UK

Helen Meech, Executive Director, The Climate Coalition

Richard Benwell, Chief Executive, Wildlife and Countryside Link

Rick Parfett, Head of Climate Policy, WWF