

How to get Britain climate ready

Views from across the political divide

“green
alliance...”



Acknowledgements

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Green Alliance's Adaptation Task Force

This essay collection is published on behalf of Green Alliance's Adaptation Task Force, convened to inspire a step change in UK government climate adaptation and resilience policy. The task force harnesses the knowledge and expertise of businesses and organisations which have a unique understanding or interest in climate adaptation. This informs Green Alliance's research and advocacy focused on the political process.

Task force members:



Green Alliance

Green Alliance is an independent think tank and charity focused on ambitious leadership for the environment. Since 1979, we have been working with the most influential leaders in business, NGOs and politics to accelerate political action and create transformative policy for a green and prosperous UK.

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Foreword



Baroness Brown of Cambridge
Chair of the Climate Change
Committee's Adaptation
Committee

As Andy Burnham began his premiership in July 2026, he did so against the backdrop of consecutive heatwaves. Yet discussion of these unprecedented temperatures has too often failed to confront a fundamental issue: the UK isn't nearly prepared enough for the impacts of climate change. With all the headlines this summer about drought and tinderbox conditions leading to devastating wildfires, the growing evidence that this also looks like being a record year for heat-related deaths - with an estimated toll of over 2,700 by the end of June alone – has fallen from the news. We need to wake up to the fact that this isn't just a one summer crisis, until we stop fossil fuel emissions our climate will continue to get more extreme, and we are not ready.

The summer of 2026 has seen the consequences of inadequate resilience, from school closures and failed harvests to wildfires and burnt out homes to overwhelmed emergency services and dangerous indoor temperatures. If the government is serious about delivering good growth in every postcode, then every postcode must also be resilient to these climate risks. Economic prosperity and climate resilience go hand in hand.

The consequences of failing to prepare falls disproportionately on those with the fewest resources and least ability to protect themselves. Low income households and those living in poor quality or rented housing are

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particularly exposed to the impacts of extreme heat and of flooding, the same people who will be most impacted by rising food prices.

Without urgent action both to prevent escalating climate change, and to adapt to the UK's new climate reality, there's a risk of deepening existing inequalities and undermining efforts to deliver regional economic renewal and more shared prosperity.

If the government does nothing, it will mean more avoidable deaths, more uninsurable homes, lower economic productivity, and more damage to communities, infrastructure and nature. Decisions made now on will shape the UK's ability to ensure its citizens can live safely and prosper for decades to come.

Sadly, the realities of flooded homes, overheated flats and droughtstricken farmland are becoming increasingly evident and frequent. This collection of essays reveals the adaptation challenge for communities and regions across the country, both the scale of what they are facing and the opportunities to build a more resilient future.

The collection features cross party contributions from across the UK: from Mete Çoban, Adrian Ramsay, Rebecca Pow, Sarah Dyke and Luke Murphy. They cover a range of intersecting themes, including planning for extreme heat, impacts on nature, adapting to flooding, consequences for farming and the importance of infrastructure fit for the future. They demonstrate that successful adaptation depends on a combination of ambitious national leadership and place-based solutions reflecting the unique needs, risks and strengths of local areas. With greater devolution, and appropriate funding, local authorities and mayors have an unprecedented chance to shape more resilient communities.

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While these perspectives and priorities vary, a common message emerges: ambitious action is needed now.

The costs of inaction are growing, with climate impacts placing increasing pressure on critical infrastructure, public services, local economies and people's health and wellbeing. As the writers make clear, climate resilience isn't an isolated challenge.

This can't be the task of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs alone. Every level of government, from national departments to local authorities, alongside businesses, communities and civil society, has a part to play.

We hope these views stimulate fresh dialogue about the future of nature, farming, housing, infrastructure and public health and recognition by policy makers that they are all deeply interconnected.

Introduction



Holly Brazier Tope
Director of politics,
Green Alliance

Climate adaptation is rapidly moving from an issue discussed at the margins of environmental policy to something felt by everyone across the country. People may not use the term ‘climate adaptation’, but they care deeply about the impacts of a changing climate and what can be done to protect their homes, communities, livelihoods and public services. This is especially clear after a summer of unprecedented heat, drought and wildfires. Communities, businesses and public services are now all too aware what a changing climate means for them as impacts become more visible and difficult to ignore, including major disruptions to infrastructure and significant threats to health.

Adapting to our changing climate will be fundamental for economic prosperity, national resilience and public health. It means ensuring that every decision made from now considers what needs to change to cope with a different climate, whether that is around buildings, infrastructure, public services, energy systems, land use, water resources or the NHS.

Despite the growing risks, progress in preparing for these impacts to date has been slow. Because it affects so many areas, governance has been a challenge and, as a result, the gap between the threats faced and our readiness to manage them is widening.

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It is time the government recognised the scale and urgency of this challenge. Green Alliance first convened the Adaptation Task Force in 2024, bringing together leaders from across business, civil society and policy making to accelerate action and highlight the gaps. Climate adaptation cannot be addressed by any one sector, or any single government department. Co-ordinated action is necessary across government and the whole economy.

This essay collection is our latest publication for the task force. Published at the end of the UK’s hottest summer on record, it could not be more timely. Contributions from across the political spectrum examine how climate adaptation is affecting the communities they serve across the UK, and the opportunities and challenges involved in building greater resilience.

The essays demonstrate cross party consensus on the need to increase ambition. They investigate how climate risks are reshaping decision making locally, where current approaches are falling short and what reforms are needed to strengthen the UK’s resilience to a changing climate.

They make clear this doesn’t just mean developing an emergency response, but that adequate adaptation is a long term mission and part of creating a stronger, fairer and more resilient society.

These views should contribute to and encourage a broader discussion about how the UK responds to the realities of climate change. Political choices made over the coming years will shape not only our ability to withstand future climate shocks, but also our capacity to thrive as a nation.

Climate adaptation is necessary to protect people, businesses and our environment, but it is also an opportunity to build a stronger UK. The challenge now is for the government to turn this opportunity into meaningful action.

Getting London heat ready: how we're building a fairer and more resilient city



Mete Çoban

Deputy mayor of London for
environment and energy

Extreme heat. Scorched parks and wildfires. Unprecedented pressure on emergency services. The climate crisis is here, and it's everyday Londoners who are paying the price. London faces more extreme heat than anywhere else in the UK, and it is only going to get hotter.

We launched London's first heat plan, *Heat ready London*, during this year's London Climate Action Week, in the middle of one of the hottest periods our city has ever experienced. Temperature records for May and June were broken one after another, as the UN secretary-general warned that London was "cooking". For only the second time, the Met Office issued a red warning for extreme heat.

The climate crisis is no longer a disaster that belongs to some distant future. It's happening all around us, and it's happening now.

Just talk to the people affected. The nurse caring for patients during a heatwave in a hospital with no air conditioning. The teacher supporting children struggling to concentrate in an overheated classroom. The older Londoners, the very young and those already living with physical or mental health conditions whose health can worsen when temperatures rise.

Heat is now one of the most serious and fastest growing threats to our health, our economy and the infrastructure we rely on every day.

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During this summer’s heatwaves, the London Ambulance Service dealt with 25,000 more calls than last summer. Demand was higher than it was during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. In July 2026, the London Fire Brigade received more than 280,000 emergency calls and dealt with 13,000 incidents. Blazes damaged homes, businesses and precious green spaces.

The 2022 heatwaves are estimated to have cost the city £1.5 billion, reflecting their catastrophic impact on health, education, transport, energy use, emergency services and the environment, not to mention lost productivity. A report commissioned by City Hall (*London Climate Resilience Review*, 2024) warns this will only increase in coming years, with climate change potentially costing the city up to £36 billion a year by the 2050s if we don’t take action today.

Heat is also an issue of fairness. Not everyone experiences a heatwave in the same way. Some people can stay cool indoors or work in air-conditioned offices. Others spend long hours working outside or return home to homes that trap heat long into the night.

I think often about the communities around the estate where I grew up in Hackney. It’s often those with the fewest resources who feel the impact of climate change first and hardest. It’s the families with less access to green space. The workers who don’t have the option of staying inside when temperatures soar. Londoners on lower incomes are often the people who face the greatest risks.

For some, heat can also be deadly. Tragically, the latest heat-related mortality data suggests we may be on track for record numbers of heat-related deaths this year. Heat doesn’t even have to be extreme to be dangerous, either. Around 90 per cent of heat-related deaths in London occur on days between 24°C and 32°C, with Londoners aged 45-65 at higher risk than other people of the same age nationally.

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be done.”

This is why we must act now.

Building a more resilient London isn't just about managing higher temperatures. It's about reducing inequalities and making sure support reaches the people and places that need it most.

In 2025, we asked Londoners what they thought should be done. More than 3,500 people responded. They told us they wanted more trees and green spaces, more shade, better access to water and practical support to make their homes, schools and neighbourhoods cooler.

Their message was clear: Londoners want a city that is prepared for a warmer world.

That's why the mayor of London, working with London councils and partners across the capital, developed *Heat ready London*. It sets out a shared vision for helping our city adapt to our changing climate.

Heat ready London focuses on six key areas: our built environment, businesses and the economy, emergency preparedness, green and blue spaces and nature, health and care services, and the infrastructure that keeps London moving.

Importantly, this is about moving from reacting to heatwaves as one-off emergencies to preparing for the reality of climate change. We need to make sure our homes, schools, hospitals, transport networks and public spaces are ready not just for the next heatwave, but for the decades ahead.

The good news is that many of the solutions we need to make London a better place to live already exist. And we're already taking action.

Trees are one of London's most effective natural defences against extreme heat, cooling down our streets and public spaces by up to six degrees. But greener streets don't just

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keep us cooler, they improve air quality, support wildlife and benefit our mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Since 2016, the mayor has planted over 640,000 trees across the city and created or revitalised the equivalent of more than 2,000 football pitches of green space. City Hall is also funding up to 5,000 more climate resilient trees and increasing tree canopy cover in the neighbourhoods that need them most.

Homes designed or retrofitted to stay cool aren't only more comfortable during summer, they can also be healthier, more energy efficient and more affordable to run. We've already retrofitted 1,000 homes across the city with Warmer Homes London. Through the mayor's Home Energy Saving Fund we've announced an additional £58 million to upgrade up to 5,000 more of London's most energy inefficient social homes, saving them up to £500 a year on their energy bills.

The same goes for public transport: a transport network that can cope with hotter temperatures isn't just more resilient, it's better for London's economy and more comfortable for the millions of people who depend on it every day. More than 190 Tube trains – around 40 per cent of the Underground fleet – are already air conditioned, alongside all London Overground and Elizabeth line trains. Transport for London is now investing in new air-conditioned trains on the Piccadilly line and DLR, as well as expanding its fleet of air-conditioned buses and improving cooling and ventilation across the network. All of this will ensure we have a transport network which is fit for the future.

We're also transforming London's waterways over the next ten years through the mayor's Clean Rivers and Healthy Waterways Plan. This will expand access to our city's blue spaces, so that Londoners have more spaces to cool down.

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This includes through swimming, where it's safe to do so, and other opportunities to spend time in or near water.

The scale of the challenge we face is vast, but so are the opportunities on offer.

By acting now, we can create a greener, fairer and healthier city for everyone. We can reduce inequalities, protect vulnerable Londoners, and build neighbourhoods that are better places to live for the people who are proud to call them home.

Today, London is leading the way in showing how cities across the UK respond to heat. Our success, I believe, is testament to the power of partnership. We've brought together boroughs, health and care system partners, emergency responders, infrastructure providers, business and finance partners and community groups to turn the vision into action.

We also need to acknowledge that the best ideas often come from the people experiencing these challenges in their daily lives. That's why it's so important that we continue listening to Londoners every step of the way.

The choice before us is clear. We can carry on reacting to heatwaves, and paying the price through worsening disruption, poorer health and bigger bills. Or we can work together to build a city that is ready for the future.

Time and again throughout our city's history, Londoners have shown that, when we come together, we can overcome the obstacles in our way. Now, we must do so again. By working together, we can make our city fairer, more resilient and better prepared for the decades to come.

We need more collaboration to manage flood risk



Rebecca Pow
Former environment minister
and former Conservative MP
for Taunton Deane

Having grown up in Somerset and represented Taunton Deane in parliament, I am no stranger to the devastation that flooding can cause. I know the toll it takes on families, businesses and communities. And, as the impacts of climate change intensify, more people across the country are facing that reality year on year. The UK is witnessing more frequent and stronger storms and floods than our housing and infrastructure can cope with. It is estimated 6.3 million homes in England are now at risk of flooding and this number is growing.

Before I was elected to parliament, Somerset suffered from catastrophic flooding in 2013-14. According to an Economic Impact Assessment, those floods cost Somerset up to £147.5 million. Hundreds of homes were affected and several villages, such as Moorland and Muchelney, were cut off due to flooded roads. A range of measures have helped to protect Somerset from floods since then and show what is possible with proper resourcing. Since 2014, more than £40 million has been spent on reducing the risks and Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan was created.

As environment minister, I was determined to do whatever I could to help prevent the devastating flooding that affects so many towns and villages across the country. I am proud of my legacy which includes implementing the Conservative government's flood and coastal defence investment programme, securing funding for repeatedly flooded

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communities and promoting nature-based solutions to prevent flooding. Tackling this problem now will always be cheaper than paying for the damages or introducing interventions as the problem gets worse in the future. Flood prevention is excellent value for money and makes a material difference to those who live in high risk areas. In fact, every £1 spent on flood prevention saves £8 in avoided damages, £3 of which is a direct government saving.

The beneficial relationship between nature-based solutions to flooding and the broader nature recovery agenda is also not properly acknowledged. Nature decline and climate change are inherently linked as negative climate changes are driving species loss. Solutions, such as tree planting and peatland restoration, have tremendous ability to reduce flood risk, as well as increase biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions. Investing in these solutions, alongside built infrastructure can multiply the benefits and give a high return on investment.

As the number of areas at risk rise, insurers have warned that some businesses may become uninsurable, potentially leading to towns being abandoned.

Householders are in a better position because they receive some guaranteed insurance protection through the Flood Re scheme which, via subsidy, keeps premiums down for homes built before 2009 in high risk areas. But this is due to come to an end in 2039 and the risks are only growing. House prices in those places will increasingly fall relative to unexposed properties. These devaluations, coupled with significant rises in insurance premiums – or refusal to insure at all – will effectively shrink the housing supply, driving up house prices in those regions deemed safer. Considering this, housebuilding should be carefully reviewed. Between 2022 and 2024, one in nine homes was built in a flood risk area. If this trend continues, 165,000 of the 1.5 million new homes the government plans to build would be situated in

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medium or high risk flood zones. While we need to build houses to extend the opportunity of home ownership and provide stable, affordable rented accommodation, we can't do that by saddling future generations with unliveable homes that damage health and fail to provide financial security. The government, and the planning system, needs to be able to manage floods effectively.

This requires collaboration. Flooding, and climate resilience cannot just sit with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It needs to be a cross departmental consideration as it affects housing, transport, healthcare, businesses and the wider economy. There are opportunities in the new thinking around water, following the water white paper and the Cunliffe review. They reflect recommendations, which I initiated in the last parliament, to join up the flooding and climate adaptation agendas.

Everybody, not just the government, has a responsibility to manage water effectively. In Somerset, my neighbours and I do what we can to reduce flood risk, by cleaning drains, building rain gardens, using water butts and so on. Local catchment-based approaches to flooding, as implemented in Somerset, should be adopted across the country. This means managing risk by looking at an entire river system, rather than only building defences at the site of a flood.

For approaches such as this to work, partnerships are needed between risk management bodies, including the Environment Agency, local authorities, Highways England and water companies. Communities deserve protection but we have to work together to get there.

The government must take more responsibility for climate adaptation



Adrian Ramsay
Green MP for Waveney
Valley

Without action from the top of government, adaptation to our changing climate risks becoming everyone's responsibility and nobody's job.

The reality is before our eyes. In the last few months, we've had intense periods of heat and, in June 2026, the UK's highest temperature on record for that month was broken. Yet, when it comes to public debate, it is emissions targets and the decarbonisation of our economy that are discussed. Very little attention is paid to how we prepare the country for the impacts already arriving.

The recent Climate Change Committee's (CCC's) *A well-adapted UK* report could not be clearer: climate change is already affecting the UK, and the risks are growing rapidly. Flood damages could exceed £4 billion annually by mid-century. More than 90 per cent of homes could face overheating risks. Wildfire danger is expected to increase dramatically. Drier summers could leave the country with water shortages of more than five billion litres per day.

These are not distant possibilities, they are foreseeable challenges that will affect everyday life across the country. For too long, adaptation has been treated as an afterthought in climate policy. The CCC's report should serve as a wake-up call. The question is no longer whether

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climate change will reshape life in Britain, it already is, but whether our institutions are prepared to respond.

As one of the relatively few MPs focused on climate adaptation, I have become increasingly convinced that the UK's greatest weakness is not just a lack of funding or a lack of urgency in parliament. The Achilles' heel is lack of co-ordination. The structures of government were built for challenges that fit neatly into departmental boxes. Climate breakdown and its impacts do not.

If a hospital needs repairing, responsibility sits with the Department of Health and Social Care. If we need new schools, that falls to the Department for Education. Most public policy problems can be allocated to a lead department. Climate resilience is all-encompassing in its nature, it cannot just be seen as an environmental issue. It affects food security, housing, public health, transport, energy, water supply, migration, national and international security all at once. Yet our system of government still treats these issues largely in isolation, and the department given responsibility to deal with it, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has neither the authority nor the budget to do so.

This siloed approach is even more magnified at the level of local authorities, regulators, devolved governments and public agencies. Climate impacts do not respect administrative boundaries. Floodwater does not stop at a council's border. Heatwaves do not distinguish between areas. Yet, too often, our response is fragmented and under resourced, creating a dangerous gap between recognising the risks and acting on them. We know what is coming, but we lack the mechanisms to plan for and co-ordinate a national response to underpin, and properly resource, local action.

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That is why I have urged the prime minister to establish a dedicated cabinet minister for climate adaptation and resilience, backed by a unit in Number 10 to drive delivery across government. Not to replace the responsibilities of existing departments, but to ensure they work together, overseeing the delivery of resilience objectives and ensuring that local authorities, regulators and devolved administrations also work towards shared national goals.

But structure alone isn't enough. If we are to deliver the CCC's minimum recommended level of action, £11 billion in annual investment is needed to prepare the country for future climate impacts. The CCC is clear that the costs of not taking this action will be greater than the cost of preparing properly.

Right now, the government is not joined up on this issue and the country is not prepared. Building a more resilient Britain requires more than stronger flood defences or cooler homes. It requires a government that is capable of thinking and acting beyond the typical Whitehall formula.

In the immediate term, more lives will be lost and the risks will continue to mount. Future generations will not simply judge us on whether we recognised the risks of climate breakdown, they will judge us on whether we acted on them to protect the public.

Adaptation, at its heart, is about protecting the places we call home, the public services we rely on and the communities we cherish. The sooner the government adopts a joined up approach to adaptation and treats it as a national priority, the better prepared Britain will be to protect future generations.

Somerset's farmers are on the front line of climate change



Sarah Dyke
Liberal Democrat MP for
Glastonbury and Somerton

Agricultural land makes up 66 per cent of the county and 91 per cent of the Glastonbury and Somerton constituency, so it is key to the nation's food production. Without urgent intervention, the UK's food security is under immense threat.

The scale of the problem is clear from the extreme weather we've experienced in 2026 alone. When Storm Chandra hit at the end of January, Somerset was battered by 50 millimetres of intense rain falling on already saturated ground, causing devastating floods. Six months later, on 25 June 2026, the UK's record for the hottest June day was broken in the Somerset town of Yeovilton, with temperatures reaching 36.4 degrees Celsius. This closed schools, put pressure on the NHS and led to drought stressed fields and compromised livestock welfare.

If Somerset's land drowns in winter and desiccates in summer, it cannot produce the food our country needs. The success of crops planted over the autumn, winter and next spring depends on irrigation, but there is a risk that reservoirs will not refill sufficiently. Along with worsening soil moisture deficits and the limited recharging of groundwater, this will lead to inadequate water for irrigation. So this year's heatwave is already impacting crop yields and water resilience in 2027.

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In 2025, prolonged dry weather led to grass yields dropping 50-80 per cent.”

If livestock farmers are unable to grow sufficient forage during the summer, they will be forced to choose between reducing their herds or paying inflated hay prices to keep them fed. We saw this in 2025, when prolonged dry weather led to grass yields dropping 50-80 per cent in areas across the UK. Farmers had to dip into winter feed stores early, leaving them with no choice but to purchase expensive, imported feed to make up the gap later.

While extreme high temperatures pose unfamiliar, devastating problems, flooding is far from new in Somerset. But we are still unprepared. After the disastrous floods of 2013-14, which saw over 600 houses and 17,000 acres of farmland across the Somerset Levels under water, the then Conservative prime minister, David Cameron, promised that money was “no object” when it came to preventing similar disasters in future. But this money never came. Alongside real term cuts to flooding budgets, the Environment Agency and local authorities, this has made Somerset even more vulnerable to flooding.

Research by the Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) shows that record rainfall in 2023 and 2024 led to the second worst harvest on record: a shortfall in production which lost UK farmers £600 million in revenue.

In Somerset, we depend on farmers to store floodwater on their land, to protect homes downstream. This has immense financial implications, with one local farmer halving his cattle numbers to store floodwater for increasingly long periods over winter.

Coming from a farming family, I understand the crucial role farmers play. This is why I have called in parliament for farmers to be properly compensated for storing floodwater and I have demanded that the government invests £1 billion a year in additional schemes to equip

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farmers to remain resilient in the face of extreme weather events and climate change.

Food security is central to our national security: with the UK currently only 55 per cent food secure, our overreliance on imports is never more evident than in times of international instability. For this reason, I have tabled a Good Food Bill in Parliament, which calls for supermarkets and public service providers to prioritise the procurement of British-grown produce, providing farmers with the long term certainty they need to invest and plan for the future. But for food to be produced domestically, we need to safeguard our farmland.

Protecting our food security means investing properly in flood resilience, here in Somerset and across the UK. I have campaigned tirelessly since my election, and most recently in my role as the Liberal Democrat spokesperson for rural affairs, for the government to take flooding and climate change more seriously.

To best support communities in Somerset, we need collaboration between government agencies and local authorities. Alongside hard engineered flood defences, we need proper investment in sustainable drainage systems and strategic catchment-based protection plans, and renewed focus on nature-based and agricultural solutions.

The minister for water and flooding, Emma Hardy, joined me in Glastonbury and Somerton at the beginning of February 2026 to meet representatives from Somerset Council, Somerset Rivers Authority and the Environment Agency. Local farmer Michael Curtis showed us his flooded farmland, highlighting the challenges faced by farmers like him who give up land to store water for months to protect their communities. Following her visit, the minister announced a £50 million landmark investment in flood defence and resilience funding for Somerset.

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This investment could be a turning point in the fight against flooding in Somerset, and I will ensure the momentum is not lost and will continue to push for farmers who sacrifice their land to be adequately compensated.

The 2026 heatwaves show flooding is only half of the story. Without urgent, whole system action to tackle climate change, extreme weather events will only grow in frequency and severity. Our farmers are key to the fight against climate change; we cannot let them fall.

Climate change is a local issue



Luke Murphy
Labour MP for Basingstoke

Climate change may seem distant, a crisis unfolding somewhere else in the world rather than here at home. It is even dismissed outright by parties like Reform, who suggest that its risk is exaggerated or not happening at all. This framing obscures the reality that its impacts are already affecting communities, infrastructure and ecosystems right now across the UK. The question is no longer whether it will shape our lives, but how we choose to confront the risks we are already seeing in our local areas.

As the MP for Basingstoke, it is important to be clear about what those local risks look like and address them. Evidence from the Climate Change Committee shows the UK already faces significant climate pressures, affecting critical sectors such as transport, agriculture and construction, as well as wider economic resilience. These risks are particularly important for Basingstoke, home to advanced manufacturing, digital industries, engineering firms and a growing population. Protecting infrastructure, our environment and our local economy means confronting climate risks directly.

An urgent environmental pressure facing my constituency is water. Basingstoke sits within an area classified as experiencing “serious water stress”, meaning water demand is close to what existing supply systems can reliably support. As our town continues to grow, that demand will increase.

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Growth is important, young people need affordable homes to live in as well as a thriving environment, but it must be matched by the infrastructure to support it. Investment in water supply and modern infrastructure is essential to ensure reliable access in the decades ahead.

Our region is also home to internationally significant natural assets, including rare chalk streams such as the Rivers Loddon and Test, as well as the North Wessex Downs. These ecosystems do far more than just provide beautiful places to enjoy. They regulate water flows, support biodiversity, store carbon and protect against weather events like flooding.

Transport, energy and telecommunications are all significantly impacted by increased flood risk. For example, more than a third of the UK’s road and rail network is considered flood prone. Similarly, substations, pumping stations and communications hubs are often located in low-lying areas, leaving them exposed to flooding. When underground cable pits or conduits become inundated, the result can be blackouts and communications outages.

Planning frameworks are beginning to incorporate measures to improve resilience. Local policies increasingly require sustainable drainage systems, flood-resilient construction and catchment-level water management strategies. While important steps, they must continue to evolve to address the climate risks.

Alongside flooding, rising temperatures present another challenge across the South East. The UK Health Security Agency has warned that, without significant adaptation, extreme heat could lead to up to 10,000 heat-related deaths annually across the UK by the 2050s. The scale of the challenge has become clear this summer, with Southern England recording its driest and warmest month ever in

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July 2026, triggering record wildfires and widespread disruption.

Meanwhile, the period spanning 2023 and 2024 brought the wettest eighteen months on record, illustrating the growing volatility of our weather due to climate change.

In January 2026, the government announced the Warm Homes Plan; a crucial programme to ensure that homes, schools and public buildings stay cool during heatwaves, as well as warm during winter, through sustainable means, protecting vulnerable residents from temperature extremes and poor air quality.

Heat also affects infrastructure. Rail tracks buckle, road surfaces soften and overhead electricity lines sag when temperatures exceed the levels they were designed for. A very visible local example of this was the landslip on the railway line in my constituency at Hook in 2023 that resulted from heavy rain and disrupted travel for days.

At the same time, electricity demand rises as cooling systems and air conditioning become more widely used, particularly in energy intensive facilities like data centres. This is why improving the energy efficiency of homes and buildings through the Warm Homes Plan is so important, helping households stay comfortable in the heat while reducing pressure on the energy system.

Hotter conditions also intensify storms, which are another growing risk. Strong winds simultaneously damage power lines and disrupt transport and telecommunications networks. Instances such as the power outages across Basingstoke following Storm Amy in October 2025 show the considerable local impacts of severe weather.

As these trends make clear, climate change is not a distant, abstract issue. It is already shaping the environmental, economic and public health landscape in towns like

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Water scarcity, flooding,
extreme heat and
the degradation of
natural systems are all
interconnected risks.”

Basingstoke. Water scarcity, flooding, extreme heat and the degradation of natural systems are all interconnected risks. They affect infrastructure, the environment, the economy and our quality of life.

The government and local authorities are responding. The government is strengthening resilience through updated national flood and coastal erosion datasets that incorporate future climate scenarios and support improved planning decisions. Investment in flood defences to protect homes and businesses also demonstrates a commitment to adapt to the more extreme weather we are now experiencing.

In Basingstoke, and across Hampshire, these national priorities are increasingly reflected in local action. Local authorities are developing habitat restoration and land use strategies through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and embedding biodiversity net gain in planning policy so new development leads to measurable improvements in nature.

While this is meaningful progress, it's essential to continue strengthening action to protect the communities in my constituency, and others across the country, from the very real, growing and cascading impacts of climate change.

Green Alliance
Romero House
55 Westminster Bridge Road
London SE1 7JB
www.green-alliance.org.uk