

## **THE CLIMATE BILL: Simple answers to tricky questions**

### **What's the point in the UK taking action when big polluters like China, India and the United States are increasing their emissions?**

We do need an international agreement to ensure that all countries cut emissions. But that is no excuse for the UK not to put its own house in order. An international agreement is likely to require the UK to do something like what's in the Bill. The Bill has been designed to ensure the UK does its fair share of cutting global emissions. It makes more sense to start that process now – as every year that emissions remain high, or increase, leaves us more to cut and less time in which to do it.

### **Don't we need policies to cut emissions, not more targets?**

We do need policies as well as targets. But policies without targets are useless. Most parties favour promoting cycling and insulating homes to tackle climate change. But how many homes, and how much of a shift to cycling? And how far will this take us in tackling climate change? If Government has policies but cannot answer these questions, then we are effectively implementing ideas and hoping that they add up to enough to tackle the problem – which is completely inadequate.

No bank would lend you a mortgage without a payment plan to make sure you can repay it bit by bit.

### **It's too inflexible – emissions won't fall by 3 per cent each and every year.**

It's true that emissions do not move in a straight line, and that things outside the control of Government (cold winters, oil price shocks, natural disasters) might have an impact on emissions from year to year. It is also true that it doesn't matter too much if emissions don't go down one year, but go down extra the following year to compensate – providing the total emissions we make by 2050 do not breach our limit.

But none of this invalidates an annual target. The Bill proposes that progress is reported to Parliament, and if there is a blip one year the Government will report this. But crucially it will also have to report on the policy measures needed to get us back on track. If the reason is simply a freak cold winter, then no further action will be needed. But if the oil price shift could lead to longer-term impacts, policies must respond to this.

### **Can we achieve 3 per cent cuts each year?**

Yes – not least because we are currently so wasteful in our use of energy. We could get a long way to the cuts without changing our lifestyles at all through cutting the energy we waste in draughty and badly insulated buildings; in inefficient car engines; and in an electricity system that wastes huge amounts of energy both in generating and transporting power.

We also need to ask the consequences would be if we do not cut by 3 per cent a year – what would the costs of living with climate change be?

### **Surely this Government can't bind future Governments to a 3 per cent target?**

Some MPs would try to have you believe this, but all Government legislation binds future Governments - otherwise we wouldn't have any laws the day after a General Election.

All Governments can then try to amend the laws that bind them, so a future Government could try to amend or get rid of climate laws as well. But that process must be carried out in Parliament, in the full glare of publicity, and can only be achieved if a majority of MPs vote for it. This doesn't make it impossible to get rid of the law – but it makes it less likely.

For more information on the Climate Bill: [peopleandplanet.org/icount/climatebill](http://peopleandplanet.org/icount/climatebill)