

Climate ambition is futile if people and communities don't buy into and participate in the action.

Community Energy England response to the government's announcement of its NDCs - emissions reduction targets for COP26

The government has today (4 December 2020) [announced](#) ambitious new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) targets of a 68% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, in line with [recommendations](#) published yesterday by the Committee on Climate Change. This is an improvement over the previous NDC target of 53% by 2030 and is supposed to be in line with our legally binding target to achieve net zero by 2050.

Community Energy England welcomes the new target but is clear that net zero in 2050 is too late and this ambition is not enough. Recently we signed a joint Climate Coalition letter to the Prime Minister demanding a 75% reduction by 2030[1].

Ed Matthew, Cop-26 Co-Director for The Climate Coalition said: *"It is notable that the UK has set a 2030 target which is a step up in ambition and in line with its legal duty to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. This is important progress but not sufficient. A more ambitious cut is both feasible and necessary to keep us safe and reflect our massive historic carbon emissions. We must remember too that the climate will not respond to targets, it will respond to carbon cuts. It is action that counts."*

The Committee on Climate Change's recent [letter to the Business Secretary](#) said, *"The NDC is more than just a number. It should be accompanied by wider climate commitments, including the development of a policy package and Net Zero Strategy to deliver against the UK goal"*

This policy package must include policy and financial support for community energy if it is to stand a chance of taking the public with it as willing and active participants in delivering the UK goal, without which we will not get the 'action that counts'.

In his announcement the Prime Minister says, *"We have proven we can reduce our emissions and create hundreds of thousands of jobs in the process – uniting businesses, academics, NGOs and local communities in a common goal to go further and faster to tackle climate change."*

His recent 10 Point Plan and the Spending Review had much in it for business, focusing on big-cheque, mostly supply-side measures. But the government failed to invest in engaging

people and local communities' consent and participation in the huge changes in the way we all do things. This is potentially fatal to the government's plan.

[The Committee on Climate Change Net Zero report](#) was clear: *"Much of the success so far in reducing emissions (e.g. power sector decarbonisation and even the phase-out of inefficient gas boilers) has happened with minimal change or awareness needed from the public. However, this cannot continue if the UK is to reach net-zero emissions."* The report continues, *"It will not be possible to get close to meeting a net-zero target without engaging with people or by pursuing an approach that focuses only on supply-side changes...Some of the difficult decisions that will be required... will only be possible if people are engaged in a societal effort to reach net-zero emissions and understand the choices and constraints... There is currently no government strategy to engage the public in the transition to a low-carbon economy. This will need to change."*

We do not see this needed change in recent policy announcements, despite warm words from the Prime Minister about *"community spirit"*, the Chancellor about *"encouraging the individual and community brilliance"* and from the Business Secretary about how *"a large part of the answer is... involve the public"*.

Duncan Law of Community Energy England said, *"The CCC says, 'This will need to change'. We see no evidence that the government has heard that or has truly understood the need to put people and communities front and centre of change policies that will hugely affect them. Community energy is key to this engagement and has for years been harnessing 'individual and community brilliance' the Chancellor spoke of to invent and deliver local solutions at a national scale. After early exponential growth[2] the sector has been disabled by 5 years of policy change[3]. A comparatively small investment by the government in enabling community energy will enable it to be the people's powerhouse for net zero. Where community energy is supported, for instance by the [London Community Energy Fund](#), it thrives and delivers. Community energy must be in policy to underwrite the targets or they will be worthless."*

The 'wider climate commitments, including the development of a policy package and Net Zero Strategy' recommended by the Committee on Climate Change must include policy and financial support for community energy if it is to stand a chance of taking the public with it as willing and active participants in delivering the UK goal. Targets are important but if the people say, "No!" then they will be missed.

The package must include:

- A new principle of putting people and communities at the heart of climate policy.
- A new Community Energy Strategy with dedicated officers within BEIS.

- A package of financial support which recognises the indispensability of the sector to achieving buy in to the climate goals and to developing local community solutions that otherwise would not happen, as well as the huge social and community benefit it delivers. This should include:
 - The reinstatement of the Urban Community Energy Fund to enable project development in urban areas,
 - Some long-term revenue support such as is offered to commercial developers by the Contracts for Difference scheme,
 - The reinstatement of Social Investment Tax Relief for community energy.
- It should identify and resource a key role for community energy in Local Area Energy Planning.
- Ofgem must be reformed to regulate the energy system transition to achieve zero carbon, maximise social benefit and enable community energy.
- The planning system must be reformed so that the ‘purpose of planning’ becomes ‘to achieve net zero as soon as possible’ and planning blocks to onshore wind in England are removed.

See Community Energy England’s [Parliamentary Briefing](#) for more information.

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Notes to Editors

About Community Energy England

[Community Energy England \(CEE\)](#) is a not for profit organisation that represents and supports those committed to the community energy sector. CEE was established by the sector to provide a voice for community energy and to help create the conditions within which it can flourish. This is done by increasing the profile of community energy, sharing best practice and by advocating for supportive policies at national and local levels. Membership consists of over 250 organisations working to support the growth of community energy. Mitigating climate change is the overwhelming motivation of members followed by social and community benefit.

[1] See the Climate Coalition [blog](#) on our reasoning for this.

<https://thecoalition.medium.com/the-race-to-zero-we-must-win-ba84f312b25f>

[2]

https://communityenergyengland.org/files/document/386/1592389827_CommunityEnergy-StateoftheSector2020Infographics.pdf see p5.

[3] This includes the removal of ROCs, the Feed-in Tariff, Export Tariff, the Urban Community Energy Fund and Tax Relief, punitive business rates on roof-top solar, planning constraints on on-shore wind and increasing VAT on solar panels, batteries and 'energy saving measures' from 5% to 20%.

See our responses to the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan [here](#) and the Spending Review [here](#)