

Two-thirds of Britons agree planet is in a climate emergency

Greenpeace poll findings released alongside group's 'manifesto' to slash emissions

Matthew Taylor

Tue 30 Apr 2019 09.18 BST

Last modified on Tue 30 Apr 2019 09.52 BST



Young climate activists demonstrate at Heathrow airport as part of the Extinction Rebellion protests.
Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP/Getty Images

Two-thirds of people in the UK recognise there is a climate emergency and 76% say that they would cast their vote differently to protect the planet.

The findings, in a poll commissioned by Greenpeace, come as the group unveiled a **detailed “climate manifesto”**, listing 134 key actions they say the government should take immediately to ensure the UK hits zero carbon emissions as soon as possible.

The manifesto – which will be sent to MPs, policymakers, thinktanks and other experts for feedback – **was released on Tuesday**, a day before a parliamentary vote on whether to declare a national climate emergency.

This month, the UK experienced the biggest civil disobedience protests for generations as Extinction Rebellion activists blocked roads, bridges and transport systems in London to highlight the escalating climate crisis. Millions of schoolchildren around the world have also taken to the streets to voice their growing alarm.

John Sauven, the executive director of Greenpeace UK, said the debate around environmentalism had been fundamentally altered by the protests.

“Climate activists, young and old, have put the UK government under enormous pressure to officially recognise the climate emergency we are facing,” he said.

“There is a real feeling of hope in the air that after several decades of climate campaigning the message is beginning to sink in. What we need now is to translate that feeling into action.”

Greenpeace’s manifesto lists 134 “practical actions” the government can take covering power, heat, transport, buildings, industry, shipping and aviation, agriculture and nature. It says these actions, if taken together, would put the UK on course for achieving net zero emissions “well before 2045”.

The plan is also available on the Greenpeace website for public comment and critique.

Sauven said: “The government clearly needs help as they are not sure how to respond. So we have produced an action plan to show how, with a little bit of courage, the UK can help avert the climate crisis, and take responsibility for our historic emissions. The plan ensures the green transition is fair and democratic for all, with new jobs and economic benefits spread across the country.”

He added that it was vital that politicians devised a plan that worked for everyone, not just “climate activists”.

“We want this action plan to feed into the many discussions springing up around the country on what is to be done. If you’ve got an idea that could help speed up the transition or expert knowledge on how your industry’s carbon emissions can be cut faster, we want to hear from you. Then the government will have even less of an excuse not to act.”

The measures outlined in the manifesto include:

A tripling of wind and solar power from current levels to ensure 80% of

electricity comes from renewables by 2030.

Ambitious targets to phase out the internal combustion engine in cars and vans with all new vehicles to be electric by 2030.

Huge insulation drive on all existing and new buildings, and the installation of renewable generation on site as far as possible.

A commitment to protect all high-carbon natural habitats and bold targets for habitat restoration/rewilding on land and at sea – including planting at least 700m trees over the next decade.

The manifesto was released alongside polling carried out by Opinium in the midst of the **Extinction Rebellion** protests. It found:

63% of British public think they are in a climate emergency.

76% say they would vote differently to protect the planet and climate.

64% say government is responsible for taking action on climate change.

The growing pressure on political leaders to act on the ecological crisis was underlined on Monday when Extinction Rebellion representatives met London's mayor, Sadiq Khan, to urge him to take more radical action.

On Tuesday, the group is due to meet the shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, and later the environment secretary, Michael Gove.

Sam Knights, 22, a member of the Extinction Rebellion team meeting the politicians, said: "The legacy of our political leaders will stand or fall by what they do now. Either they take steps to give our children the future they deserve or they do nothing.

"They must respond to the climate and ecological emergency with the clarity and urgency our children demand."

Following this month's mass civil disobedience protests both the Scottish and Welsh governments have declared climate emergencies. The Labour party, which is committed to overseeing a "green industrial revolution", declared a climate emergency in March.