

# CLIMATE CHANGE ACT 2008

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## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### SUMMARY

3. The Act sets up a framework for the UK to achieve its long-term goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to ensure steps are taken towards adapting to the impact of climate change. Its main elements are as follows:
  - **Setting emissions reduction targets in statute and carbon budgeting.** The Act establishes an economically credible emissions reduction pathway to 2050 and beyond by putting into statute medium and long-term targets. In addition, the Act introduces a system of carbon budgeting which constrains the total amount of emissions in a given time period. Carbon budget periods will last five years, beginning with the period 2008–2012, and must be set three periods ahead. The Secretary of State is required to give indicative ranges for the net UK carbon account in each year of a budgetary period, to set a limit on use that can be made of international carbon credits in each budgetary period and to develop and report on his proposals and policies for meeting carbon budgets.
  - **A new reporting framework.** The Act provides for a system of annual reporting by the Government on the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions. The new Committee on Climate Change will have a specific role in reporting annually on progress, with the Government required to lay before Parliament a response to this progress report.
  - **The creation of an independent advisory body.** The Act creates a new independent body, “the Committee on Climate Change”, to advise the Government and devolved administrations on how to reduce emissions over time and across the economy and, on request, on any other matter relating to climate change, including adaptation to climate change. This expert body will advise on the optimum trajectory to 2050, the level of carbon budgets, and on how much effort should be made by the part of the economy covered by trading schemes and by the rest of the economy, as well as reporting on progress.
  - **Trading scheme powers.** The Act includes powers to enable the Government and the devolved administrations to introduce new domestic trading schemes to reduce emissions through secondary legislation. This increases the policy options which the Government could use to meet the medium and long-term targets in the Act.
  - **Adaptation.** The Act sets out a procedure for assessing the risks of the impact of climate change for the UK, and a requirement on the Government to develop an adaptation programme on matters for which it is responsible. The programme must contribute to sustainable development. The Act also gives powers to direct other bodies to prepare risk analyses and programmes of action, and advisory and progress-reporting functions to the Committee on Climate Change.
  - **Policy measures which reduce emissions.** The Act will be used to support emissions reductions through several specific policy measures: amendments to improve the operation of the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligations; a power to introduce charges for single use carrier bags; a power to pilot local authority

*These notes refer to the Climate Change Act 2008 (c.27)  
which received Royal Assent on 26th November 2008*

incentive schemes to encourage household waste minimisation and recycling; amendments relating to the Certified Emissions Reductions Scheme; powers and duties relating to the reporting of emissions by companies and other persons; a duty to make annual reports on the efficiency and contribution to sustainability of buildings on the civil estate.